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Palestinians protest against Bethlehem wall

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) — Hundreds of Palestinians protested for a third day Wednesday against Israel's construction of a 6-foot-high cement wall around a holy site in this Palestinian town. Chanting "God is great," some 400 demonstrators, most of them school students, marched towards Rachel's tomb, believed to be the site where the Biblical matriarch was buried. Dozens of Israeli troops ringed the tomb area and kept the marchers away from the site. The marchers dispersed peacefully. Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij has complained to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres that the construction of a cement wall around Rachel's tomb violated the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. The agreement calls for an Israeli checkpoint near the tomb, not a wall, Palestinians have said. Israel maintains the wall is necessary to protect Jewish visitors at the site. In a related development Wednesday, Palestinian police denied Israeli reports that their officers arrested two members of the militant Islamic Jihad group late Tuesday in the Bethlehem area. Israel's channel two television said the two suspects wore belts packed with explosives and planned to carry out a suicide attack in Jerusalem.

King, Prince Hassan visit premier

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday visited the Prime Ministry where he met with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and gave instructions on several issues. Later Wednesday, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan visited the Prime Ministry and met with Mr. Kabariti. Prince Hassan and the prime minister discussed several domestic and international issues, with special emphasis on the economic programme of Mr Kabariti's new government. Prince Hassan chaired part of a meeting of the ministerial development committee and issued directives on means to deal with the economic situation. The committee reviewed the economic reform programme, Jordan's monetary policy and agricultural reforms. The committee, chaired by Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour, is one of four ministerial committees formed by the Cabinet.

Prince Hassan, Sheikh Saad exchange messages

Jordan, Kuwait agree to normalise ties

AMMAN (Agencies) — Jordan and Kuwait have agreed on principles for resuming normal relations strained since the Gulf crisis and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Wednesday.

Petra said that Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah has sent a letter to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan informing him that Kuwait had agreed to take practical steps for the resumption of normal ties.

The letter was delivered Wednesday to Prince Hassan by Sheikh Saad's envoy, Dr. Mohammad Rumeihi.

Sheikh Saad praised Jordan's policies which he said were aimed at restoring Jordanian-Kuwaiti ties and enhancing joint Arab action, Petra added.

In a statement to Agence France Presse the envoy was quoted as saying that Kuwait has agreed to Jordan's request to normalise relations between the two brotherly countries and overcome the consequences of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

According to Petra, Sheikh Saad had exchanged with Prince Hassan several messages during the month of Ramadan.

"Kuwait has agreed to Jordan's request to normalise relations between the two brother countries and overcome the consequences of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait," Dr Rumeihi said. He said he brought Prince Hassan a message from Sheikh Saad on "practical measures to reestablish normal relations between the two brothers."

Dr. Rumeihi said Prince Hassan had made the first move towards normalising ties and praised the new "direction of Jordan's policy towards ties with Kuwait and the strengthening of joint Arab action."

The crown princes exchanged messages on Feb. 4 to mark the Holy Month of Ramadan, the first high-level contact between the two countries since 1990.

Wednesday's announcement came after His Majesty King Hussein sealed reconciliation with Saudi Arabia at the weekend with his first official visit to the kingdom since the Gulf crisis.

Jordan's rapprochement with the Gulf was accelerated by a change in its attitude towards Iraq.

King Hussein has urged a change in the Iraqi government.

Last week U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said Washington was cooperating with Jordan and other countries in the region to help bring down the Iraqi president.

In Kuwait the crown prince has praised "positive developments" of Jordan's foreign policy, the official Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) said Wednesday. It said Sheikh Saad made the comments in a letter he sent Tuesday to Prince Hassan.

KUNA said Sheikh Saad's letter "noted positive developments seen in Jordanian foreign policy recently."

The agency said that Sheikh Saad wrote that he appreciated Jordan's offer to help "achieve a formula" for freeing around 600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war believed still held in Iraq. Baghdad denies holding them.

The prisoners' families have not heard from them since they were arrested during the Iraqi occupation.

If Jordan succeeds in convincing Iraq to account for them, it would likely persuade many Kuwaitis to drop their opposition to a reconciliation.

Deputies in the 50-member, opposition-dominated parliament have repeatedly said they will never forgive Jordan.

But KUNA noted that Sheikh Saad told Prince Hassan that the Jordanian initiative on the PoWs was "a base for positive and practical steps related to future bilateral relations."

The Jordanian embassy in Kuwait remains closed and there are still no direct flights between Kuwait city and Amman.

The Kuwaiti embassy in Amman is headed by a charge d'affaires.

The pro-government Al Siyassah daily Wednesday quoted "reliable sources" as saying that the Kuwaiti embassy in Amman will celebrate the anniversary of the emirate's Feb. 26, 1991, liberation for the first time this month. This was confirmed in Amman. The newspaper said Jordanians will attend these celebrations "at the highest level."



NOBLE MISSION: His Majesty King Hussein Wednesday lauded the role of the Jordanian Armed Forces in maintaining peace in several countries around the world. Addressing a contingent from the Special Forces, who will join the French troops stationed in Bosnia as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) peace-keeping mission, King Hussein voiced confidence and pride in the Special Forces, saying that they set an example in their dedication to serving the country and its causes. He wished them every success in carrying out their peace-keeping mission in the best manner. King Hussein said: "This is a new mission to serve people and maintain peace. This time you will be joining other friendly forces, in a peace-keeping mission. I hope every one of you will be an ambassador for Jordan, the Jordanian Armed Forces, and the Arab Army, in addition to the Special Forces, which are always and will continue to be, God willing, in the forefront." The King was accompanied by the commander of the Special Forces, Prince Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein, His Royal Highness Prince Hamzeh Ibn Al Hussein and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff, Abdul Hafez Mirai Al Kaabneh.

'Iraqi Kurds need Islamic revolution'

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iraqi Kurdistan needs an Islamic revolution along the lines of Iran to put an end to internal strife, the leader of a Kurdish Islamic faction said in an interview published here Wednesday. Sheikh Adham Barzani, leader of Kurdish Hizbollah in northern Iraq, told the daily Iran News that Tehran played a "pivotal" role in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurds "need a popular Islamic revolution and the way has been paved," said the Hizbollah leader, a nephew of Massud Barzani who heads the mainstream Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). "The impact of the Islamic revolution is very positive," said Mr. Barzani, in Tehran for ceremonies marking the 17th anniversary of Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. The KDP and its rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have ruled northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad for the last five years.

Lebanon magistrate demands death for 20 Islamists

BEIRUT (R) — A Lebanese magistrate demanded the death penalty on Wednesday for 20 Islamists after charging them with belonging to a violent armed group and murdering a rival Islamist cleric last August. Investigating judge Abdullah Bitar in an indictment demanded death for Palestinian Ahmad Saadi for planning the Beirut murder of Sheikh Nizar Al Halabi, head of the pro-Syrian Sunni Islamist movement Al Ahbash, last August. Mr. Bitar also demanded capital punishment for five accomplices — three Lebanese and two Palestinians — for committing the murder.

'3 mujahedeen executed in Iran'

NICOSIA (AFP) — The People's Mujahedeen, the main Iranian armed opposition group, charged Tehran on Wednesday with executing three of its jailed members. The People's Mujahedeen said the three prisoners were executed about two weeks ago in western Iran, according to a statement sent to AFP in Nicosia. "The Iranian resistance draws attention of the international human rights authorities to the continuation of brutal executions in Iran, and urges the U.N. special representative to investigate these very recent executions," the group said. The three executed prisoners were identified as Azar Hassani, 31, her brother, Alireza Hassani, 36, and their cousin, Sadeq Hassani. The first two were executed in Hamedan's prison and the third in Kermanshah's, the group said. The U.N. human rights representative for Iran, Maurice Danby Copithorne, a Canadian, has been on a six-day visit to Iran since Saturday to assess the human rights situation in the country.

Knesset dissolved

Labour to reconsider Palestinian state, Jordan Valley settlements

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli legislators voted overwhelmingly Wednesday in favour of dissolving the parliament, but could not agree on a date for early elections.

The governing Labour Party meanwhile, began debating possible changes to its platform, including the removal of a clause denying the Palestinians the right to establish an independent state.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres had been expected to make a final announcement Wednesday on an election date.

But after meeting with cabinet ministers from his Labour Party, Mr. Peres said he would leave the final decision to the party's five-member election team.

Labour has proposed May 21 for the elections, but many party members would go along with a May 28 date to appease the ultra-orthodox, who say the earlier date is too close to the Jewish holiday of Shavuot on May 23. The opposition Likud Party is pushing for June 4, also in deference to requests from the religious parties.

"We decided to get in touch with all the different parties and see what is really the best date for all of us," Mr. Peres told reporters Wednesday.

Mr. Peres said further complications arose when he got a letter from university heads saying that 120,000 students would be taking exams on June 18. If the election were held June 4 and none of the candidates for prime minister got more than 50 per cent of the vote, a revote would be held June 18.

Mr. Peres called the students "a very important body when it comes to the elections." Youth support for Labour skyrocketed after the Nov. 4 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Mr. Peres announced Sunday that he would move up elections from the originally scheduled date of Oct. 29, saying he felt he needed a new mandate from voters.

Labour ministers, meanwhile, said the party would convene in April to amend its platform. The platform, which now denies a Palestinian right to statehood, was

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Talks over displaced Palestinians make progress

CAIRO (AFP) — Israel and Arab countries ended a round of talks on Palestinians left homeless in 1967 on Wednesday with the first signs of progress in almost a year towards agreeing on their fate.

"We have made some progress, a step forward and I do hope will take some more steps forward," the head of the Israeli delegation Joseph Hadass said after the close of the two-day session of talks.

His Palestinian counterpart Zohdi aid Said "A serious breakthrough was made on Tuesday compared with the previous six meetings."

"We have been able to start talking figures, which means we settled the question of the definition of the term displaced," he added.

The commission, which also groups Egypt and Jordan, has been wrangling since March 1995 over just which Palestinians displaced by the 1967 war can return to the West Bank and Gaza under self-rule accords signed by Israel and the PLO.

He said details of the accord would be prepared at the next meeting from March 12 to 23 in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Since the committee was created in March 1995, Israelis and Arabs have disputed the definition and, as a consequence, the number of Palestinians who should be allowed to return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel, which estimates the number of displaced Palestinians at 200,000, on Tuesday proposed allowing 4,000 per year to return to the autonomous territories, meaning it would take 50 years to repatriate them all.

"The Israelis divide the dispalced Palestinians into eight categories and accept the return of four of those categories for humanitarian reasons, at the rate of 4,000 per year," an Egyptian foreign ministry source said.

The Palestinians put the figure of dispalced at around 800,000 and say their number has swelled to 1.5 million together with their dependents. The United Nations puts the number at 350,000.

(Continued on page 3)

Israeli embassy disapproves travel warning to Jordan

AMMAN (AP) — The Israeli embassy has refuted a recent warning issued by Israel to its citizens to be especially careful when visiting Jordan, an embassy spokesm said Wednesday.

Shalom Tourgeman said the embassy has sent a memorandum to Israel's ministry of foreign affairs stressing that the warning has created "unnecessary sensitivities" between the two countries, which signed a peace treaty in October 1994.

"Jordan is a safe place because tens of thousands of Israelis have come here and nothing has happened to them," Mr. Tourgeman told the Associated Press.

"Also, diplomats in the embassy have not run into any problems nor have there been any acts against them," he said.

He said that Yigal Pressler, Prime Minister Shimon Peres' advisor on terrorism who drew up the warning, should have "consulted with the embassy prior to its issuance."

There was no immediate comment from Jordanian officials.

Last week, Israeli authorities at border crossings began handing out pamphlets warning Israelis to stick to main roads and keep a low profile while in the Kingdom.

They also advised Israelis not to visit tourist sites after dark, not to leave their passports with Jordanian hotel reception clerks and not to accept mail or packages.

More than 120,000 Israelis have visited Jordan since the peace treaty was signed. But only a small number of Jordanians have gone to Israel because most people here are reluctant to normalise relations with the Jewish state.

Car bomb explodes in Bahrain; no injuries

MANAMA (Agencies) — A car bomb exploded Wednesday in the parking lot of a shopping mall south of the Bahraini capital, but caused no injuries, officials said.

The mid-day explosion in Issa Town occurred three days after a bombing at the Diplomat Hotel, where three employees were injured, and less than a month after a bomb blast at the Le Royal Meridien Hotel.

The bomb was placed inside the trunk of the car, according to a government official who asked not to be named.

"I heard a big bang and I turned and I found this car burning," Fatma Durbash, a Bahraini, said. "The flames were going up and I was afraid that the cars parked nearby would also go up in smoke."

The windows of the government-run mall were blackened, although none was broken in the blast which occurred in the parking lot around 100 metres away.

A security guard at the mall said the remains of the car had been removed by the authorities who reported it

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Trade cuts with Iraq purely economic, says Kabariti

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government's decision to cut the volume of trade with Iraq by 50 per cent was based on economic and fiscal considerations, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti said Wednesday.

"It is an economic decision based on an in-depth study that was aimed at putting an end to the accumulation of the debt burden on the Kingdom," said Mr. Kabariti at Wednesday's Lower House of Parliament session.

The premier was replying to a question by leftist Deputy Khalil Haddadin on the government's policy towards trade with Iraq and its influences on the local market. Mr. Haddadin contended that the government's decision to lower the volume of trade with Iraq by 50 per cent was inconsistent with the country's policies that encouraged Jordanian industries to depend on the Iraqi market.

"The government's decision deals a deadly blow to our economy and our industry in particular, in addition to the additional burden on the already high percentage of unemployment in the labour workforce," said Deputy Haddadin, who has very close ties to the ruling Baath Party in Iraq. Jordan should consider "the suffering of the Iraqi people," he said.

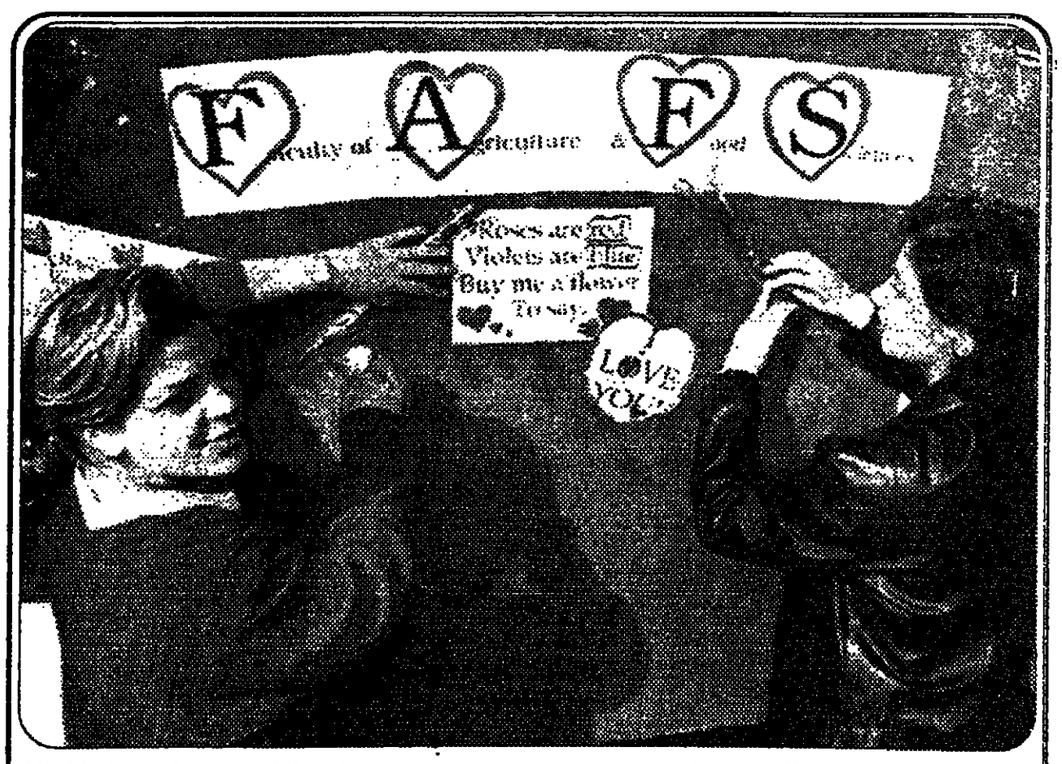
Mr. Kabariti said that the decision was a "pure economic decision. The House's Finance Committee and any other party could study this issue at length" if they liked.

Also at Wednesday's session, Islamic Action Front Deputy Hamzeh Mansour called on the House to take quick action to denounce the U.N. Security Council decision to condemn Sudan for failing to hand over three suspects to Ethiopia in the assassination attempt on the life to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last year.

"Despite the firm stand that Sudan expressed at the unofficial meeting of the U.N. Security Council, especially that it condemns all forms of terrorism and that it had no intention to provide any support to terrorist activities despite all of the assurances and the flexibility of the Sudanese leadership, the American administration insisted on issuing a U.N. resolution accusing Sudan of terrorism."

"This decision has been followed by other procedures mainly the withdrawal of U.S. embassy staff from Khartoum and the issue of warnings to Americans not to travel to Sudan. This is unjust and unfair," Deputy Mansour, the IAF bloc's spokesperson said.

"I call on the House to condemn the decision and to call the Arab Parliamentary Union for an urgent session," stressed Mr. Mansour.



VALENTINE' DAY IN LEBANON: Two Lebanese women studying at the American University in Beirut (AUB) Wednesday decorate a stand near the agricultural department on their campus prior to selling Valentine's Day roses produced by the college. The price of red roses more than quadruples during the Valentine's Day holiday in Lebanon (Reuters photo)

EU praises new attitude of Assad towards peace

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Senior European Union (EU) officials wrapped up a shuttle mission between Syria and Israel on Wednesday saying Syrian President Hafez Al Assad's attitude towards the peace process had "completely changed" for the better.

The EU delegation headed by Foreign Minister Susanne Agnelli of Italy, current president of the 15-nation union, also called for a greater European role in the Middle East peace process, following a meeting here with Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Ms. Agnelli, who met Tuesday in Damascus with the Syrian leader, said: "We were very pleased to find this time that President Assad was very open to the negotiations with Israel."

"His attitude towards the peace process has completely changed," she said.

Mr. Peres said he had "found Mrs. Agnelli's report on her talks in Damascus very encouraging."

He said the Israeli-Syrian negotiations due to resume Feb. 28 outside Washington were notably different from past talks in that the two sides were now discussing "a regional project to bring an end to war" and economic cooperation.

But he also reiterated that "real problems" remained to be resolved before a peace agreement could be signed.

The talks have notably made no progress on the key issue of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which the Jewish state seized during the 1967 war.

Asked if there was any hope for a breakthrough in the talks before Israeli general elections scheduled for late May or early June, Mr. Peres said, "I will pray for one, but not promise it."

Mr. Peres said discussions on a final date for the election were continuing between his Labour Party and other political groups.

Ms. Agnelli said her delegation's mission had shown that "the moment has now come for Europe to be able with the United States to help with the peace process and the Syrian track."

She added however that Europe was not necessarily seeking a seat at the negotiations being held at the Wye Plantation near Washington.

Ms. Agnelli was accompanied by representatives of Spain and Ireland, the other two current members of the EU "Troika" which is made up of the past, present and future presidents of the union.

Following their talks with Mr. Peres, the EU delegation met Palestinian officials at Orient House, the unofficial Palestinian office in East Jerusalem, and was also due to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in Gaza City.

Mr. Peres told reporters he had objected to Ms. Agnelli about her planned stop at Orient House. "I told her it's totally unnecessary," he said.

Israel asks foreign visitors not to go to Orient House, saying such visits legitimise Palestinian claims to Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem as their capital.

Ms. Agnelli said she and Mr. Peres had not discussed EU objections to Israeli draft legislation which would authorise security agents to use "moderate physical force" in interrogating Palestinian and other detainees suspected of involvement in planning anti-Israeli attacks.

"We are here to talk about peace between Israel and Syria and nothing else," she said.

The bill, which has not yet been submitted to parliament, has drawn sharp criticism from foreign and domestic human rights groups. Press reports said the EU could threaten to downgrade relations with Israel if the project became law.

Israeli police keep low profile in Golan protest

MADJEL SHAMS, Golan Heights (AFP) — Druze inhabitants of the Golan held their 14th annual general strike Wednesday to protest Israel's annexatison of the heights, but unlike previous years Israeli police did not intervene.

Demonstrators demanding an end to Israeli rule raised Syrian flags over Madjel shams, headquarters of the 15,000 -strong Druze community on the disputed plateau. Reports elsewhere indicated the one-day shutdown was widely followed.

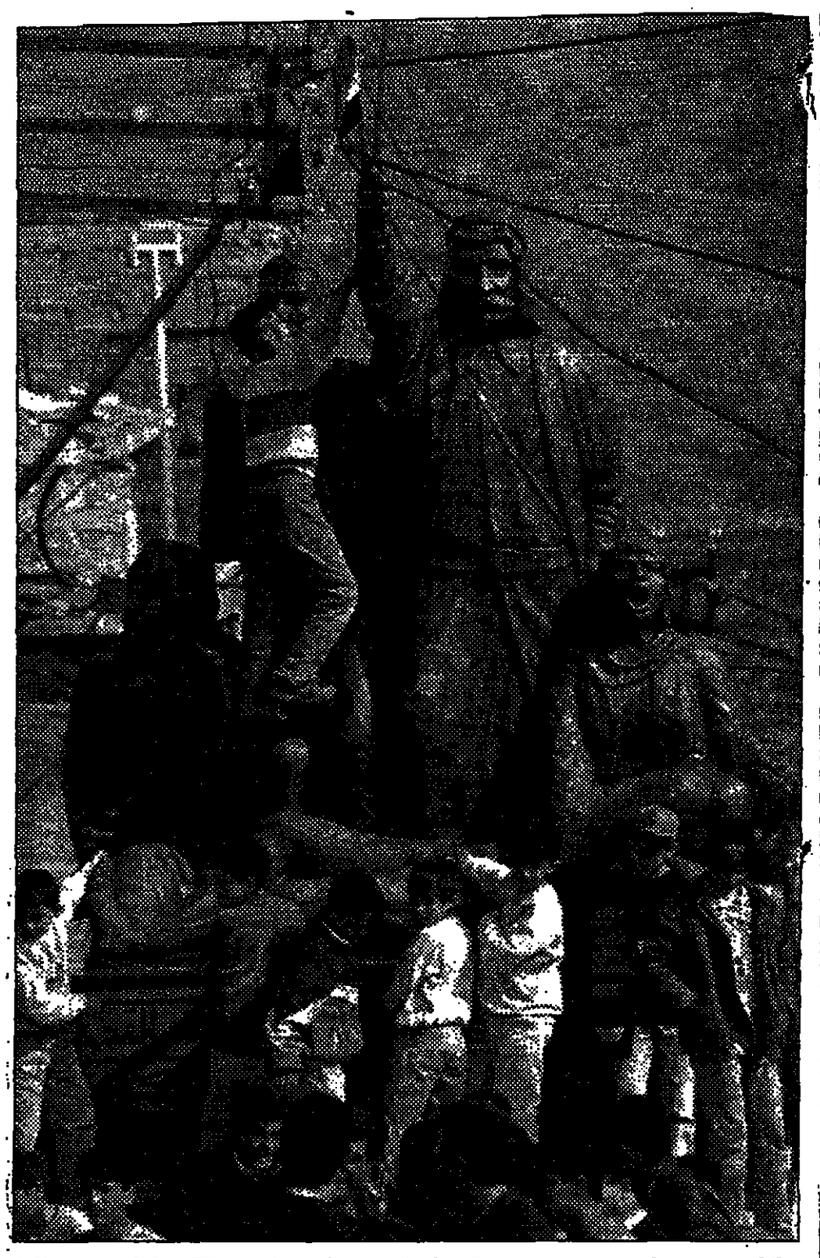
For the first time since the Golan natives began protesting Israel's 1981 annexation, Israeli police did not intervene to tear down the Syrian banners.

Schools and shops across the Golan were closed and Druze workers stayed away from their jobs in Israel. No incidents were reported.

The Druze, descendants of a breakaway sect of Islam who took refuge in the mountains of Lebanon and the Golan centuries ago, were the only inhabitants who remained on the heights after Israel seized the area in the 1967 Middle East war.

Of the quarter-million Druze in the region, 80,000 live in Israel and have taken Israeli citizenship, but those on the Golan never became naturalised Israelis.

In Damascus, the official SANA news agency said the general strike showed the local peoples' "determination to struggle against Israeli occupation."



A Druze Arab boy Wednesday raises the Syrian flag on a statue in the centre of the Majdal Shams village during a protest against Israeli occupation. Hundreds of members of the secretive sect, which broke from Islam in the 11th century, called for a return of the disputed plateau to Syria which Israel conquered in the 1967 Middle East war (Reuters photo)

Afghan warring factions agree to open trade routes

KABUL (Agencies) — A convoy of 18 United Nations trucks left Pakistan en route for the beleaguered Afghan capital Wednesday, carrying tonnes of much needed food supplies, U.N. officials said.

The trucks were to travel along a key transit route between the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad and the capital, Kabul.

Pakistani border officials confirmed the convoy passed into Afghanistan at about noon.

Government and rebel forces have been fighting for control of a stretch of road between Jalalabad and Kabul, but both on Wednesday claimed the road was open.

A defence ministry spokesman said the government and rebel Hezb-e-Islami factional commanders signed an agreement that should guarantee safe passage along the road.

"We signed an official agreement with the Hezb-e-Islami," said defence ministry spokesman Amrullah, who like many Afghans uses only one name.

A spokesman for the Hezb-e-Islami denied there was a formal agreement, but said the road would remain open.

"The road is safe for travel, but no formal accord has been reached," Qutbuddin Hilal told the Associated Press during a telephone interview in the Pakistani capital Islamabad.

If the road remains safe for passage, it should help ease the food shortage affecting many Kabul residents, a U.N. official said.

Heavy fighting and poor winter weather had closed all roads except the eastern route into Kabul.

In January, relief workers warned the city could face a severe food crisis if the transit routes were not secured.

The International Committee of the Red Cross recently began an airlift operation to bring essential food and medicine to Kabul.

The government also claimed to have secured an agreement with the Hezb-e-Islami for the restoration of electricity to Kabul.

The spokesman for the rebel faction said the rivals were negotiating over the supply of electricity, but refused to confirm the agreement.

"It's a difficult situation that we're discussing," Mr. Hilal said.

The main power plan for Kabul is controlled by rebels just east of the city, leaving the capital without electricity for almost three years.

Warring Muslim factions have been battling each other since 1992 when they toppled the communist government and took control of Kabul.

In another development the Kabul government Wednesday dismissed the outcome of key talks between Afghan opposition leaders aimed at ending the bloody civil war here as insignificant.

"I do not see anything new or significant in these declarations from Islamabad," said defence ministry spokesman Dr. Abdullah, one of the most powerful figures in the government.

The comments came a day after leaders of the Supreme Coordination Council, the main Afghan opposition coalition group, ended a marathon six-day meeting in the Pakistani capital with a series of resolutions.

The leaders, including northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum and ex-Premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, announced the formation of a 10-man council responsible for negotiating a transfer of power with Kabul.

They also vowed to attack the government if it launched an assault on any opposition group, including Islamic Taliban militia who are besieging the battered Afghan capital.

State Department blasts Farrakhan

WASHINGTON (R) — The U.S. State Department on Wednesday blasted militant Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan for "cavorting with dictators" in Libya and Iran.

"I would just say that we have seen the press reports of the tour that Mr. Farrakhan has made of Africa and the Middle East. I think it's shameful that an American citizen, much less a major religious leader in the United States, cavorts with dictators like (Libyan leader Muammar) Gaddafi and the Iranian leadership," Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Mr. Farrakhan, leader of the U.S. Nation of Islam movement, was quoted by an Iranian newspaper as saying in Tehran: "You can quote me: God will destroy America by the hands of Muslims."

S. Arabia spent $18.7 billion on holy sites — King Fahd

DUBAI (R) — Saudi Arabia has spent more than 70 billion riyals ($18.7 billion) developing its two holy cities of Mecca and Medina over the last decade, King Fahd said.

Earmarking a portion of national income for spending on the two cities and Islam's holiest mosques was "an investment in favour of Islam and Muslims," the king told ministers at his first cabinet working session since falling ill late last year.

Saudi Information Minsiter Fouad Bin Abdul Salam Bin Mohammad Farisi conveyed the king's remarks which were reported by Saudi newspapers on Wednesday.

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest oil producer and exporter. Oil revenues which have funded its development since the first commercially exploitable amounts were found in 1938 contributed to 37 per cent of gross national product in 1995.

King Fahd, 74, said at the meeting which ended early on Tuesday that the government "shouldered the implementation of the largest expansion in the history of the two holy mosques" to fulfill its responsibilities towards the Muslim World.

It was the king's first return to duty since he was hospitalised in November for what U.S. doctors said was a stroke and handed over state affairs to heir apparent Crown Prince Abdullah on Jan. 1 while he rested.

Officials made clear he had not abdicated.

Diplomats in the Saudi capital Riyadh said it was not yet clear if King Fahd's appearance at the cabinet meeting, which he chaired, meant he was resuming his duties fully.

"He's been prominent in appearing on television lately to let people know he's okay, but it's still early days yet," one diplomat said. "We would expect to see an announcement if he was returning to a full resumption of duties."

The king acceeded to the Saudi throne in 1982 on the death of his half-brother King Khaled and is known in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab stats as custodian of the two holy shrines.

Mecca and Medina, sacred to the world's one billion Muslims, are inland from Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast. Both are closed to non-Muslims.

Muslims throughout the world turn to pray in the direction of Mecca which is the site of the Ka'bah, the large cubic stone structure covered with a black cloth in the centre of the Grand Mosque, Islam's most venerable holy place.

Medina, about 340 kilometres to the north, was the seat of government in the early years of Islam. The Prophet Mohammad is buried there.

More than 1.5 million Muslims last year attended the pilgrimage, which is expected to start in April this year.

The kingdom has widened bridges and expanded approaches to holy sites to relieve congestion. Hundreds of pilgrims were killed in a stampede in 1994 during the devil stoning ritual.

King Fahd said expansion of the sacred sites of Mecca includes surrounding squares set aside for prayer had increased its area to 356,000 square metres from 152,000. It could now accommodate one million worshippers from a previous capacity of about 340,000.

In Medina, the capacity of the Prophet's Mosque and surrounding areas can accommodate up to one million in peak times.

The king traditionally spends the last 10 days of the Muslim month of Ramadan due to end around Feb. 20 in Saudi holy places.

Nordic nations deplore Rushdie sentence

OSLO (AFP) — Norway and Denmark lashed out at the Iranian government on Wednesday for refusing to lift a death sentence against British writer Salman Rushdie, on the seventh anniversary of the fatwa.

The fatwa, or religious decree, was issued in 1989 by then-Iranian leader the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for what he claimed was blasphemy in Mr. Rushdie's novel "The Stanic Verses." Since then, the writer, of Indian origin, has been under 24-hour police protection.

"The Norwegian government strongly denounces the fact that Iran has still not lifted the fatwa against Salman Rusahdie and others who have been involved in the publication of his book 'The Satanic Verses,'" Norwegian Foreign Minister Bjoern Tore Godal said in a statement.

"The fatwa goes against generally recognised human rights principles and represents an intolerable attack on the freedom of speech and the press," he said.

1,000 candidates for Iraqi elections

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Around 1,000 candidates will view for 250 seats in parliament next month when Iraq holds its first general elections in seven years, officials announced Wednesday.

"Four candidates will compete for each seat in the National Assembly," during the March 24 elections, the deputy speaker of parliament, Ghanem Aziz Khaddouri, told the Alif Baa weekly.

"It's a larger proportion of candidates than in previous elections," Mr. Khaddouri said.

The government pledged to hold parliamentary polls after President Saddam Hussein won 99.6 per cent of the vote for another seven years in power during an Oct. 15 referendum, which the United States denounced as a sham.

Iraqis had until Monday to register as candidates in an election where they will be represented only by their names rather than by a political party.

The official Al Jumhouriyah newspaper last year announced plans to form new parties representing Kurds, ecologists, Social Democrats and Marxist-Leninists, even though the Communist Party was banned here in 1978.

A former Communist Party leader, Yussef Hamdan, who intended to found a Marxist-Leninist party, told AFP he was running as an individual because his party had not won approval.

Justice Minister Shebib Al Malkai said the Iraqi press will publish the list of candidates on March 3 when the election campaign begins.

Elections will be held throughout Iraq except in the Kurdish-controlled areas of the north where four million of the country's 18 million people live.

President Saddam decided to "delay the elections in the autonomous region of Kurdistan until things return to normal." Kurds have controlled the area since U.S.-led forces defeted Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.

Candidates must be 18 years old, old have a junior high school diploma, and "believe in the principles of the July 17, 1968 revolution," which brought the Baath Party to power, according to the electoral law.

They must have also had "an honourable attitude" during the war with Iran from 1980 to 1988, and the Kuwait war, it said.

The state will cover the costs of the electoral campaign and the official media will give candidates equal time.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

13:00 Fireman Sam
13:10 Disney's Aladdin (cartoon)
13:30 The Legends of Treasure Islands
14:00 My Secret Identity
14:15 NBA
15:15 The New Leave it to Beaver
15:40 Doc. — Adventures of the Old West
16:30 Gillette World Sport Special
17:00 ... Doc. — Un Jour Une Fete
17:30 Varieties — Taratata
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine — Archimede
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Keeping Up Appearance
20:10 Islam in Africa
21:10 Pride and Prejudice
21:10 Drama — Pride and Prejudice
22:00 News in English
22:25 Doc. — A Journey Across the Land of Islam
22:45 Feature film: "Who Will Love My Children?"
23:59 Series — Matlock

PRAYER TIMES

05:57 Fajr
06:15 (Sunrise) Duhu
11:50 Dhuhr
14:56 'Asr
17:25 Maghreb
18:43 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Arlman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel: 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Moderate weather conditions will prevail with temperatures around average and winds northwesterly moderate. On Friday temperatures are expected to rise slightly.

In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 5/14
Aqaba 11 / 23
Deserts 4 / 15
Jordan Valley 10 / 21

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 14 Aqaba 24. Humidity readings: Amman 80 per cent, Aqaba 31 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bahjat Bader 832642
Dr. Wisam Hazin 748563
Dr. Jihad Samimeh 755255
Dr. Nidal Dahlch 692625
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairoujh pharmacy 623672
Najih pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Ratib Atullah 994424
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897367
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0102301
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 681100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-532300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-532300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 64428176
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jubal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)9005601
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532300-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:15 Dhahran (RJ)
07:20 Sanaa (RJ)
09:20 Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:45 Colombo (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:45 New York (RJ)
17:35 Moscow (RJ)
18:25 Athens (RJ)
19:10 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:15 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
19:35 Rome (RJ)
23:30 Larnaca (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 Beirut (RJ)
07:15 Moscow (RJ)
10:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)
11:00 ... Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:05 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:15 Rome (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
12:15 Athens (RJ)
19:50 Larnaca (RJ)
20:10 Cairo (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:35 Jeddah (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:00 Doha (QT)
16:10 Dubai (EK)
19:00 Paris, Damascus (AF)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:20 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
01:15 London (KJ)
01:20 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)

21:25 Aqaba (RW)
22:25 Aquba (RW)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

11:30 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain, Muscat (GF)
13:30 Algiers (AH)
14:30 Riyadh (SV)
14:40 Istanbul (QT)
17:15 Dubai (EK)
21:10 Cairo (MS)
02:30 Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights (Marka Airport)

07:00 Aqaba (RW)
08:00 Aqaba (RW)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	600/600
Banana (Mukammar)	520/520
Banana (imported)	820/650
Cabbage	60 / 40
Carrot	170/100
Cauliflower	180/100
Cucumbers (large)	150/ 100
Cucumbers (small)	280 / 180
Eggplant	200/ 150
Garlic	1000/800
Grape Fruit	220/120
Lemon	400/250
Marrow (large)	120/ 80
Marrow (small)	230 / 120
Onion (green)	140/100
Onion (dry)	210/ 150
Orange	480/300
Pepper (hot)	500 / 400
Pepper (sweet)	540/400
Potato	220/150
Radish	160/100
String Beans	700 / 500
Spanish	160 / 100
Tomato	150/80

Minister unveils grand plan to build waste-water treatment plants

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times



Samir Kawar



Samir Habashneh

AMMAN — Minister of Water and Irrigation Samir Kawar Wednesday unveiled a government project to construct waste-water treatment plants all over the Kingdom.

Mr. Kawar said the government will invite tenders for the phase implementation of the project in the next few weeks. He said the scheme will start in the Jordan Valley and extend to the outermost reaches of the country.

"We are very well aware that certain plants have been constructed sporadically," the minister said at the Lower House of Parliament session on Wednesday. "The government will brief the House on all developments."

Mr. Kawar was replying to a question by centrist Deputy Mifleh Lawzi who complained of the effects of wastewater treatment plants on their surrounding environments.

Mr. Lawzi said residents living nearby the plants complain of the "unbearable foul odors and the high number of flies" polluting the environment and threatening public safety.

"We hope to hear from the minister of water his reply to this persistent problem and the solution to solving it before the arrival of summer," the deputy said. "And if the ministry offers no solution, we will be forced to bring up the issue once more."

Mr. Kawar promised to keep the House posted on all developments in the government's wastewater treatment project.

Following the question and answer period, the House endorsed the Farmers Union draft law.

At the beginning of discussions, lawmakers argued over whether such a law was really needed and whether the government should support its endorsement.

Former Minister of Culture and Deputy Samir Habashneh argued against ratifying the draft on the basis "that it does not add anything to the agricultural sector in the Kingdom."

But Minister of Agriculture Mustafa Shneikat was quick to point out what he saw as the benefits of this draft law, especially in giving the farmers the opportunity to participate in the decision making process and unifying their efforts to serve their interests and increase production.

The draft legislation also ensures fair and equal representation to different types of farmers. Membership in the union, according to the draft, is voluntary.

Discussions also centred on the role of the government in backing the establishment of this union.

Mr. Habashneh again argued against the government's involvement in such a project and said that most of the agricultural institutions that received the backing of the government had, in principle, failed to meet the duties and responsibilities they were charged with.

"When such a union is endorsed by the law, then the government will have direct responsibility," Mr. Habashneh said. "We are still suffering from past experiences such as the case of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation and other institutions."

But Islamic Action Front Deputy Bassam Emoush contended that if the government will not shoulder responsibility then "the union" will be "in a mess."

The house finally voted in favour of the Judiciary Committee's decision to maintain government supervision of the union.

The 23-article draft law was endorsed with minor amendments.

Jordanian-French consortium to study feasibility of dam construction in Wadi Mujib

AMMAN (Petra) — A consortium of Jordanian and French companies Wednesday signed a contract with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation to conduct a JD 400,000 study on the feasibility of constructing a diversional dam in Wadi Mujib, in Karak Governorate.

Water Authority Secretary General Hashem Shboul signed the contract along with the head of the consortium, Jean Pierre Dubois.

Mr. Shboul said in a statement that the study is financed by a grant from the French government and entails identifying the prospects of building the dam with a 100,000 cubic metre storage capacity.

The projected dam will be designed to store water running through the Waleh and Mujib wadis before releasing it through a three-kilometre tunnel to reach a water tower.

From the tower, the plan is to allow the water to pass through a 30-kilometre pipeline to the tourist complexes on the east coast of the Dead Sea and other pipelines of 72-kilometres length to reach the Arab Potash Company plant near the southern tip of the Dead Sea and another to irrigate lands in the southern Jordan Valley.

He said that the proposed dam will ensure the flow of at least 25 million cubic metres of water annually to designated destinations.

Under the terms of the contract, the consortium will prepare a feasibility study on the construction of the dam and the pipelines, as well as on the preparation of the final designs and tender documents, according to Mr. Shboul.

He said the collected water from such a dam was expected to irrigate 20,000 dunums of farmland in the southern Jordan Valley.

He said the project, which will cost $250 million is considered part of the integrated plans for the development of the southern Jordan Valley, adding that work on the study was expected to start at the beginning of March and last 11 months.

Construction work on the dam would begin early next year, he said.

Mr. Dubois said the French side was ready to participate in any of the Jordanian development schemes.



Water Authority Secretary General Hashem Shboul and head of a Jordanian/French consortium, Jean Pierre Dubois, Wednesday sign a contract for the study of the feasibility of construction a dam in Wadi Mujib (Petra photo)

'Drug rehabilitation centre to go up in Tabarbour area'

AMMAN (Petra) — The Health Ministry Wednesday said it has finalised studies conducted in cooperation with German experts on establishing a drug rehabilitation centre near Amman to treat drug abusers from Jordan as well as the Arab region.

Minister of Health Aref Batayneh said the ministry took possession of a 125-dunum plot on Wednesday in the Tabarbour district where the complex is to be built.

The construction, he said, would take 450 days and would be conduction in two stages. The local firm of Durrat Al Qasem will be paid JD 1.45 million to complete the project, the minister said.

Dr. Batayneh said the compex will comprise a total area of 4,500 square metres and will hold 50 beds.

The centre will treat men and women suffering from drug abuse and addiction.



Aref Batayneh

Trial in schoolyard death case to begin

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Amman Criminal Court Thursday will start hearings in the trial of two youths accused of killing Ala' Abu Sumayya, a 10th grader of Kuteiba School, in the Hashmi district. The boy was killed on Sept. 25 during school break.

According to Issa Abu Fidah, the attorney for the defence, the formal charge against the youths, Wasim Jaber and Sa'ed Nakhleh, both 17, is assault leading to death.

Some of the victim's schoolmates who witnessed the incident, told the Jordan Times that Ala' was assaulted by a group of 12th graders "who stomped on his stomach."

A relative of the victim said Ala's body showed signs of having received several blows to the chest.

Officials refused to confirm or deny any of the allegations.

No teachers were in the schoolyard when the incident occurred, according to student witnesses, but Ministry of Education officials explained that the absence of teachers at that time was because teachers are required to stay in the classroom until all their students have left for recess.

Last month, Prosecutor General Mohammad Quteishat forwarded the case to the court after interrogating more than 200 students in connection with the incident.

There were conflicting reports concerning the killing, and the prosecution declined to release any information until its investigation was over.

Following the incident, HRH Crown Prince Hassan visited the Abu Sumayya family to offer his condolences on the death of their son.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERTS

* Musical performance by Jalal Al Wandai at the Phoenix Gallery, Gardens Street on Thurs., at 8:30 p.m. Also conducting a special performance of songs by Mohammad Jabbar on Friday at 8:30 p.m..

FILM

* "Native Son," at the American Center on Thurs. at 2:00 p.m.

IRBID CULTURAL DAY

* Cultural Day by the Irbid Cultural Directorate on Thurs. at the Royal Cultural Centre (including a concert at 9:00 p.m., and a book and art exhibition all day long).

PLAY

"Ramadan Supermarket," (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Abstract (plastic) art by Mirvat Emile Wahhab at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery (until March 5).

*Paintings by Jordanian and other Arab artists at Alia Art Gallery (until March 5).

* Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29).

* Printmaking and paintings by Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying paintings and sculptures by contemporary artists (until Feb. 18).

Japan donates education equipment to Institute of Diplomacy

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government of Japan will donate language education equipment amounting to $95,640 to the Jordanian Institute of Diplomacy within the framework of the Japanese Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Projects (GAGP), a Japanese embassy statement said Wednesday.

The grant contract was signed Wednesday by Takayuki Kimura, ambassador of Japan in Amman, and Mazen Armouti, president of the Institute of Diplomacy (ID), the statement said.

According to the embassy, the language education equipment will provide a valuable opportunity for fellows at the ID to study foreign languages and promote their language skills to enable them to seek new jobs both inside and outside of Jordan.

It said that Japan introduced to Jordan in fiscal year 1993 a grant aid scheme called "Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Projects," aiming at extending assistance mainly to non-governmental organisations, research institutes, hospitals and local governments.

Under the aid scheme, said the statement, its assistance has so far been extended to 4 projects amounting to $204,921 in FY 1993, 7 projects amounting to $548,759 in FY 1994, and 4 projects amounting to $217,968 in FY 1995.

By the end of FY 1995 (March 31, 1996), the total amount of the grant under the GAGP is expected to reach about $590,000.

The grand total of the Japanese cooperation extended since the beginning of FY 1995 (April 1995) to Jordan in the forms of grants, non-project loans, project assistance loans and debt rescheduling stands at $378 million, and several more projects are expected to be agreed upon within FY 1995, the statement said.



Mazen Armouti

Three Amman districts to get new schools, says education department

AMMAN (Petra) — The Department of Education for the Amman Governorate Wednesday announced that the allocation of three new schools to be built in the eastern parts of the capital and the formal inauguration can be expected at the end of the current school year.

Department Director Mashour Kharabsheh said the schools, which will cost a total JD 1.5 million, will be erected in Marka, Manara and Naser: three densely populated regions of Amman.

Mr. Kharabsheh said the Marka school will have 31 classrooms, two halls for vocational and technical training, a student workshop, warehouses and other utilities.

The school in Naser district will also have 31 classrooms, but will comprise several halls for theatre activities, workshops and other activities for 1,300 schoolgirls. The Manara school will be built similarly to the other two and will open to girls.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education Wednesday announced that it has made arrangemnets for government schoolteachers of the first secondary and the primary classes to start training on how to apply the ministry's new syllabuses

The teachers will attend lectures and conduct practical exercises in the process of training.

Also Wednesday, Minister of Education Munther Masri chaired a meeting of the ministry's Planning Committee to discuss ways to implement His Majesty King Hussein's directives to the new government concerning the development of the educational system.

He said the ministry plans to convert the greater number of ordinary schools into comprehensive institutions where students are offered academic courses and vocational training. Few comprehensive schools currently exist in Amman and some other cities.



Munther Masri

Convicted spy gets life sentence

By Rana Husseini
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The State Security Court last week sentenced a 45-year-old man to life imprisonment with hard labour for espionage

Mohammad Ahmad Oueineh, who pleaded innocent, was found guilty of leaking top secret military information to Israel since 1960.

Mohammad Dweik, the attorney for the defence, told the Jordan Times Wednesday that he was not appealing the verdict "because the prosecution had strong compelling evidence" to indict his client.

According to court documents, Oueineh met with an agent who worked for the Israeli Secret Intelligence Service, the Mossad, in 1960.

The court said that the agent convinced Oueineh to join the Mossad to spy on Palestinian commandos in 1970 and the Jordan Armed Forces in 1992.

The prosecution said that Oueineh was asked by the Mossad to obtain top secret military information regarding the Kingdom's armed forces.

It said Oueineh befriended a sergeant in the Jordanian army in 1990 whom he tricked into obtaining top secret military information. The sergeant became suspicious of Oueineh and informed the concerned authorities, the prosecution said.

In his confession to the court, Oueineh, who was apprehended on Nov. 10, 1994, said the Mossad took advantage of his difficult financial situation, as he was unable to obtain a degree, and convinced him to join them.

The court's decision will be automatically reviewed by the Court of Cassation next month.

In light of the extenuating circumstances that have resulted from removing Israel from the list of enemy states, the sentence was reduced from death to life imprisonment.

Talks over displaced Palestinians progress

(Continued from page 1)

The ministry source said Israel had agreed to the return of four categories of displaced Palestinians:

— Those who were outside the Palestinian territories at the time of the 1967 war.

— Those who could not renew their Israeli permits for residence in the territories because they were abroad.

— Those who fled the territories in 1967.

— Those who left the West Bank and Gaza in the second half of 1967 to join relatives outside the territories.

But Israel refused the return of those "who committed anti-Israeli attacks or have files with Israeli security services," the source said.

The Jewish state also rules out the return of "those who once lived in East Jerusalem, those who lived on land confiscated for Jewish settlements, and refugees from 1948 who settled in the territories and then fled them in 1967," the source added.

Israel seized the West Bank in 1967, along with Arab East Jerusalem which it then annexed.

Save water... every drop counts!

Keating launches campaign with new republic push

MELBOURNE (R) — Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating formally launched his re-election campaign Wednesday with a new populist strategy to create a republic as his conservative opponents fended off accusations of racism.

Immigrant groups were quick to condemn two opposition politicians, one of whom described migrants as "wogs" while the other derided critics as "slanty-eyed little ideologues."

Mr. Keating, who has struggled but failed to shift his opponents' commanding lead in opinion polls as the March 2 election approaches, demanded that opposition leader John Howard take firm action against them.

Mr. Howard scrambled to condemn the two National party members — Bob Burgess and Bob Katter, both from north Queensland — and said the remarks were offensive and tasteless.

Mr. Keating meanwhile moved to the offensive, formally launching his re-election campaign with a promise to ask the people in a non-binding plebiscite to endorse his republic slogan — that Australia's head of state should be an Australian.

The current head of state, Queen Elizabeth, is British.

"We believe that Australia's head of state should be one of us," Mr. Keating said in his campaign speech.

Mr. Howard, who has proposed to hold the full referendum needed to make the technical constitutional changes for a republic, dismissed the proposal as "cheap populism."

"Whoever wins this election, there is going to be a vote on whether or not Australia becomes a republic," he told reporters.

He also said his coalition partner, the National Party, had warned the two members who made the racists comments.

"It's a very clear warning to both of them that they have to uphold and observe the principles of the National Party."

The racism controversy had been brewing since Jan. 26, Australia's National Day, when Mr. Burgess referred to citizenship ceremonies as "de-wogging ceremonies."

Mr. Katter, a sitting member of parliament, defended him on radio Tuesday, saying most people he had talked to had found the remarks "screamingly funny."

Mr. Burgess's critics were "slanty-eyed little ideologues who persecute ordinary Australians all the time," Mr. Katter said.

Kathleen Chung, president of the Australian Chinese Association in New South Wales, said these sorts of comments would cost the National Party votes with the majority of the community offended by these kind of comments.

"He (Katter) should be more tolerant to people with different views to his," Ms. Chung said on radio.

"It is racist in that it is the use of a derogatory term."

Mr. Keating's own Labour Party had similar troubles late last year when a Western Australian member, Graeme Campbell, endorsed an anti-immigration party's stand against Asian immigration.

Mr. Keating, a firm proponent of a multicultural Australia, kicked Mr. Campbell out of the Labour Party, even though that risked losing the seat to Mr. Campbell as an independent.

Like the two National candidates, Mr. Campbell came from a remote rural area — in fact, the largest electoral district in the world, covering most of the huge state of Western Australia.

With the waves of immigrants who have moved to Australia since World War II, about 40 per cent of Australians now do not describe themselves as having the traditional Anglo-Celtic ancestry.

Increasingly, new immigrants are coming from Asia, rather than the traditional sources of Britain and continental Europe.

Australia is now in the third week of a five-week election campaign which may end 13 years of Labour government.

Labour has trailed by about eight percentage points in opinion polls since the beginning of the campaign, although one poll issued Tuesday disagreed with the others and said labour was gaining.



Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating (left) waves to his supporters with his daughter Alexandra after delivering his policy speech for the Labour Party at their official election launch in Melbourne Wednesday (Reuter photo)



Republican presidential candidate and front runner Bob Dole waves to supporters at a spaghetti dinner in Manchester. Sen. Dole is in New Hampshire following his first place finish in the Iowa caucuses (Reuter photo)

Republican candidates chase Dole in New Hampshire

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire (R) — Senate majority leader Bob Dole, fresh from a narrow Republican presidential caucus victory in Iowa, campaigned in the key primary state of New Hampshire Tuesday with two hard-charging rivals close on his heels.

Separately, Texas Senator Phil Gramm, once considered Sen. Dole's main competitor for the Republican presidential nomination, abruptly cancelled appearances Tuesday and flew back to Washington amid reports he was likely to drop out of the race after his fifth-place finish in Iowa.

With only a week to go before the first-in-the-nation primary, Sen. Dole, once the race's undisputed front-runner, tried to make the best of his slim victory Monday in Iowa.

Sen. Gramm, disappointed by his finish, denied that he was ending his candidacy and would support Sen. Dole, but an aide told reporters that "all cards will be on the table" in the meeting between Sen. Gramm and his advisers.

"When you run fifth in Iowa, an important state, you would have to be brain-dead not to take a look at where you are and what you're doing," Sen. Gramm told reporters at the Manchester Airport before departing.

Nevertheless, the Gramm campaign continued running television ads promoting his conservative economic positions.

Conservative columnist Pat Buchanan and former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander, whose second- and third-place showings in Iowa were both stronger than expected, both moved quickly to capitalise on the momentum.

"We come to New Hampshire now with our crusade to put Americans first really brimming with hope and opportunity," an elated Buchanan told reporters, calling himself "the only one true, authentic, conservative who can win this campaign."

Mr. Alexander, who started his campaign day in the early morning hours in subzero weather, said the New Hampshire primary would make the race a one-on-one contest between himself and Sen. Dole.

"The most important words I can say are — let the future begin," Mr. Alexander told cheering supporters and a media mob at a Concord diner.

Sen. Dole flew in to address the state legislature. If he was concerned about losing ground to Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Alexander it did not show in his speech, which was interrupted by backers in the legislature's gallery chanting "Dole Dole Dole"

Every U.S. president since 1952 has first won this primary, with one exception — Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992. But even Mr. Clinton fed the New Hampshire mystique by finishing second here at a time when his fortunes were low and proclaiming the state had made him "the comeback kid."

If Iowa unleashed two new serious challengers to Sen. Dole in Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Alexander it took some of the edge off the challenge of millionaire publisher Steve Forbes who finished a weak fourth despite spending millions of dollars on campaign ads attacking Sen. Dole and others.

Mr. Forbes had pulled ahead of Sen. Dole in some New Hampshire polls before Iowa, but his standing now remained to be seen. Mr. Forbes cancelled his one appearance in the state Tuesday for what his staff called "travel glitches."

For Sen. Dole, New Hampshire represented an ironic battleground on which to shore up a campaign under heavy challenge.

The state has been unkind to him twice before, leaving him among the forgotten also-rans when Ronald Reagan swept its Republican primary in 1980 and rejecting him in favour of George Bush in 1988. Sen. Dole had won the Iowa caucuses then, too.

He tried to laugh off that bitter memory, saying, "my pollster came in whistling 'hail to the chief'" after the 1988 Iowa caucuses. But then came the New Hampshire loss and "I haven't seen him the since," he said.

As the laughs died down, he added, "I don' t think I paid him either."

Joan Collins keeps $1.2 million book advance

NEW YORK (R) — British actress Joan Collins won a legal battle against Random House Tuesday when a jury decided she could keep a $1.2 million book advance that the publishing giant had fought to get back. Collins, best known for playing the scheming Alexis Carrington in the television series Dynasty, smiled broadly when the foreman announced the decision of the jury, which deliberated less than two hours. "It ended two years of absolute hell," Collins said afterward, raising a clenched fist in a sign of victory outside the State Supreme Courthouse in Manhattan amid a crush of reporters, photographers and television crews. The jury ruled that Collins had submitted a complete manuscript, a Ruling Passion, and could keep not only her advance but possibly get additional money as well. Her attorneys estimated Random House may owe her between $800,000 and $2 million more. Asked about a second manuscript Collins had promised to Random House, however, with the working title Hell Hath No Fury, the jury voted in favour of the publisher. The publisher had sought the return of the $1.2 million advance claiming both manuscripts were unfinished and unpublishable.

Showgirl turned legislator rocks Peru politics

LIMA (R) — Showgirl-turned-legislator Susy Diaz attributes her success in Peruvian politics to God, fate and a willingness to bare her bottom to lure votes. The former night-club performer's life-long dream to serve in Congress was realised soon after she began bathing in the holy waters of the Huaringas Lagoon in Peru's Andes. "I was blessed by God. This was my destiny," she said. But Ms. Diaz also benefited from the less spiritual but no less effective approach of baring her buttocks. On the campaign trail, she handed out condoms and urged voters to make love but practice safe sex.

N. Zealand teams battle to save stranded whales

NELSON, New Zealand (R) — Rescue teams fought to save 27 pilot whales beached at the top of New Zealand's South Island Wednesday. Five other whales from an original pod of 32 had died by midday and Department of Conservation (DOC) spokesman Geoff Rennison said rescuers were battling to save the remainder. "We've got 27 live whales and we are busy working with them at the moment," he said in a telephone interview.

Starstruck burglar sparks McCartney plot scare

LONDON (R) — A thief planning an armed robbery who approached ex-Beatle Paul McCartney for an autograph sparked a scare Wednesday over an imaginary £100,000 assassination plot, a spokesman for the star said. The Sun tabloid newspaper reported that a hitman tried to involve the thief and a partner in a bid to kill McCartney, but the spokesman denied this. "This was a scare about nothing," said the spokesman for McCartney, who was the target of a kidnap plot 12 years ago. The 53-year-old former Beatle gave his autograph to one of two thieves who went on to carry out a robbery, the spokesman said. When the starstruck burglar later told police about the autograph, his story became distorted into a false report that a hired hitman had tried to involve the two robbers in a plot to assassinate McCartney.

Japan premier wins round in battle over mortgage firms

TOKYO (R) — Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto won a victory of sorts Wednesday when the opposition temporarily froze demands to summon his predecessor over the vexed issue of winding up troubled mortgage firms.

The ruling and opposition camps in parliament struck a compromise, deciding instead to question former Finance Ministers Masayoshi Takemura and Hirohisa Fujii Friday.

Parliament will also summon Koichi Kato, secretary-general of Mr. Hashimoto's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and Masami Tanabu, a former agriculture minister.

Initially, the two camps had drawn up an ambitious list of candidates to testify in parliament over the affair, including no less than four ex-prime ministers.

The opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party) said it agreed to summon the four who were to appear Friday, including Mr. Fujii and Mr. Tanabu, from its own ranks, but said it has not given up its demand to call in Mr. Hashimoto's predecessor Tomiichi Murayama from the coalition government's side.

Mr. Takemura heads the Sakigake Party, the smallest partner in the three-party ruling coalition which includes Mr. Murayama's Social Democrats and the LDP.

The schedule, decided by the budget committee of the lower house of parliament, effectively means there was only a slim chance Mr. Murayama will actually be summoned.

"We will continue to demand Mr. Murayama be called in, even if the (committee) fails to decide on this," said Shinshinto's chief parliamentary negotiator Takeo Nishioka.

Former premiers are rarely summoned to testify for their decisions while in office. The last was Yasuhiro Nakasone in 1991 over a funding scandal.

The mortgage firm issue erupted in December when Mr. Murayama's government earmarked 685 billion Yen ($6.46 billion) in state funds to wind up the private firms, known as "jusen".

Shortly after announcing the controversial plan, Mr. Murayama stepped down in favour of the head of the largest party in his tripartite coalition, Mr. Hashimoto.

The mortgage firm plan has been threatening the state budget, which must clear the lower house by the end of February for enactment before the new fiscal year starts in April.

The seven mortgage firms accumulated unrecoverable loans topping 6.4 trillion Yen ($60.3 billion), mostly in speculation on land during the late 1980s "bubble" era of inflated asset prices.

So far, the government has not given a full explanation of the reasoning behind the scheme, except to say it was necessary to maintain trust in Japan's financial system.

In the latest poll on the issue, conducted by Japan's TBS Television Network last weekend, 76.8 per cent of the respondents opposed the scheme, while only 16.8 per cent supported it. The poll covered 1,216 voters.

In a similar poll conducted in December soon after Mr. Murayama announced the plan, the rate of opposition was 65.9 per cent.

Meanwhile, the government was making attempts to convince the public that it was trying to clarify the responsibility of the private firms involved in the scheme.

Japanese media reported Wednesday that national tax authorities raided two mortgage firms. The reported raids followed similar probes Tuesday of five real estate companies which had borrowed heavily from the mortgage firms.

A senior tax official told a key parliamentary panel Tuesday: "We want to see whether tax payments have been made properly at companies related to the mortgage firms." ($=106 Yen)

S. Korea, U.S. scrap war game

SEOUL (R) — South Korea Wednesday announced the cancellation of a major war game with the United States this year in a move aimed at convincing North Korea to implement a landmark nuclear agreement with Washington.

This will be the third year in a row when the annual military exercise, codenamed Team Spirit, "will have been cancelled to encourage North Korea to forgo its suspected nuclear weapons programme.

In the past team spirit involved tens of thousands of U.S. and South Korean troops.

"The governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America have decided not to hold 1996 Team Spirit exercises," Suh Dae-Won, spokesman for South Korea's Foreign Ministry, said.

"The decision was taken to create a positive atmosphere in the Korean peninsula and promote confidence needed to continue implementing the Geneva agreement," he said.

He said the decision was made partly because North Korea had respected the nuclear deal.

Under the deal signed in October 1994, North Korea agreed to freeze and eventually dismantle its graphite nuclear reactors, which Washington said were intended to make atomic weapons.

Instead, Washington formed an international consortium, in which South Korea is a major participant, to provide Pyongyang with safer, light-water reactors worth more than $4 billion.

"The decision (to cancel the war game) will have no significant impact on the readiness of the Republic of Korea-U.S. combined forces command," Mr. Suh said.

Smaller-scale, joint field training exercises with the U.S. would be held this year, a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Indonesia Hostage-takers ready to talk

JAKARTA (R) — A rebel leader holding 13 people, six of them European, in Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya has said he wants to meet Red Cross officials, rekindling hopes for the hostages, a spokeswoman said Wednesday.

"We have secured a contact with Kelik (Kelly) Kwalik. He proposed a meeting with us in the near future and we hope it will take place next week," said Sri Wahyu Endah, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

"He has determined the place and time, but we can't give you details about it," she said.

Mr. Kwalik, an Amungme tribesman and a former Roman Catholic seminarian, had earlier said in talks with Christian missionaries that he wanted to meet Icrc officials.

The last firm communication with the rebels, who are members of the Free Papua Movement (OPM), took place on Jan. 25 when Roman Catholic Bishop Herman Munninghoff met Mr. Kwalik, his former pupil, near Mapunduma, site of the Jan. 8 kidnapping.

ICRC officials in Irian Jaya have dropped leaflets from helicopters or handed them to tribespeople in the hope of resuming contact.

Twenty-six people, some on a biological survey, were seized in Mapunduma, 160 kilometres from the nearest main town Wamena, where the rescue operation by Indonesian Armed Forces is concentrated. Wamena is 4,000 kilometres east of Jakarta.

The rebels have freed 13 people — 12 villagers and German Frank Momburg. Four Britons, two Dutch people and seven Indonesians remain hostage.

Earlier attempts to persuade the guerrillas to free the hostages included sending them newspaper articles to show that their cause had been publicised. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has also broadcast messages from hostages' families.

The official Antara News Agency quoted Irian Jaya military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Maulud Hidayat as saying Tuesday the exact location of the kidnappers and hostages was unclear.

The Dutch colony of West Papua was ceded to Indonesia in a United Nations-sponsored process in 1963, becoming Irian Jaya.

Philippine gunmen hit Manila buildings

MANILA (R) — Gunmen damaged two Citibank buildings and the Shell Philippines Headquarters with grenades Wednesday, wounding at least four people, while President Fidel Ramos was just around the block making a speech.

Four explosions resounded at lunchtime in bustling Makati, Manila's main business district, sending employees in nearby buildings diving for cover, police and witnesses said.

The unidentified attackers abandoned a bag containing an M-79 grenade launcher, two assault rifles, eight grenades, black hoods and a priest's cassock they apparently intended to use as a disguise, police General Job Mayo said.

"That's the classic equipment of bank robbers," he said. "What we have recovered indicates an aborted bank robbery."

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack and it is unclear if Citibank or Shell were deliberate targets.

Mr. Ramos was addressing a meeting of computer experts at the Peninsula Hotel around the block when the attack took place.

"I did not dive into my car," the former army general told his weekly news conference when asked for his reaction.

"I did not ask for protective cover because I am used to these things. It's been my bread and butter for 49 years. Just relax."

The blasts shattered the glass facade of the Citibank building, made a hole near the base of the adjoining Citi Tower and smashed windows on the eighth and ninth floors of Shell House.

Three passers-by and a Citibank customer on his way out of the bank were wounded.

Several killed at Russia's N. Korea mission

MOSCOW (R) — Several North Korean guards were killed in an exchange of fire at Russia's trade mission in Pyongyang Wednesday after an armed man burst in, ITAR-TASS news agency said.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman in Moscow confirmed a North Korean had broken into the Russian embassy compound.

Grigory Karasin, quoted by TASS, said his ministry was in constant contact with the embassy, trying to clarify details of the incident.

TASS, reporting from the North Korean capital, said the man, a Korean national armed with a pistol, was trying to negotiate terms for political asylum.

TASS, quoting an unnamed source in the Russian community, said the man, who appeared to be aged about 25, was threatening to commit suicide if his demands for asylum were not met.

No Russian citizens had been hurt in the shooting, but the source said the intruder was demanding that a Russian representative be with him while negotiations were going on.

TASS said North Korean military officials, apparently taking part in negotiations, were going in and out of the embassy grounds where the mission building is located in central Pyongyang.

The three entrances into the grounds were guarded by North Korean police but life around the embassy precincts was going on as normal, TASS said.

The incident took place two days before the birthday of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il which is a national holiday.



Pieces of slab on a collapsed tunnel are blown away, covering a road along the seaside Wednesday after rescue workers demolished a giant boulder which had crushed the road tunnel (foreground) in northern island of Hokkaido (Reuter photo)

Digging delayed for 20 trapped in Japan tunnel

TOKYO (R) — Rescue workers Wednesday demolished a giant boulder which crushed a road tunnel in northern Japan and started preliminary work to reach the 20 people trapped inside since the weekend.

A controlled explosion, the fourth in as many days, finally demolished most of the 50,000-tonne slab which had crushed the Toyohama Tunnel, about 50 kilometres northwest of Sapporo, regional capital of Hokkaido.

"The operation is going smoothly and it looks like we can start the (final phase of) rescue work by tomorrow morning," top government spokesman Seiroku Kajiyama told a news conference.

Rescue officials said workers were using power shovels to remove pieces of the slab that landed on top of the tunnel but the digging inside could not start until experts made sure their work would not cause further landslides.

Television networks carried live pictures of the explosion, with huge boulders of black rock cascading down the steep cliff onto the seashore below.

Since the accident Saturday morning there have been no signs of life from the 20 people trapped. They include five high school students and three younger children among 19 people on a commuter bus. One other person, a motorist, is also believed to be trapped.

Ever since the accident, it has looked increasingly unlikely that they could have survived the impact from the falling boulder and freezing nighttime temperatures.

But relatives have waited round-the-clock at the scene for word of their loved ones. They had agreed the blasting should go on until the fate of those trapped was known.

"This explosion was successful. I strongly hope that rescue work starts quickly and I do want to see my daughter's face," the father of one trapped schoolgirl told NHK Television.

The rescue party of hundreds of policemen, firemen and soldiers are equipped with bulldozers and power shovels. But officials said most of the work would have to be done by hand because of falling pieces of rock debris.

Three previous controlled explosions in the past three days chipped away only parts of the huge slab.

When it fell, a 40-metre (44-yard) stretch of the roof crashed down from just inside one of the entrances of the 1,086-metre (1,188-yard) tunnel.

Geology experts say landslides are a constant hazard on Hokkaido, an island regularly shaken by earthquakes and blanketed by snow for up to six months of the year.

They say earth tremors open small cracks in rocks and ice can form in the cracks, widening them and leading to regular rock falls.

Maccanico gives up; Italian election looms

ROME (R) — Prime Minister-Designate Antonio Maccanico abandoned his attempt to form a government Wednesday and political party leaders said Italy now appeared to be heading for a snap general election.

Mr. Maccanico, a 71-year-old master political fixer, announced his decision after meeting President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro to tell him that two weeks of intense negotiations with Italy's rival centre-right and centre-left blocs had come to nothing.

He told reporters he was "deeply embittered" that his efforts to build a government on a cross-party accord to work on accompanying constitutional and electoral reforms had been wrecked by what he called political obstacles.

"A great and extraordinary opportunity has been lost for the future of the country, whose political and institutional system remains immersed in a grave crisis," Mr. Maccanico said.

The next step now depends on Mr. Scalfaro, who must decide whether to dissolve the fragmented, 23-month-old parliament and send Italy to a general election some three years ahead of schedule in late April.

Conservative leader Silvio Berlusconi and his leftist adversary Massimo D'Alema both said they saw that prospect as likely even though they agreed that a vote would probably not result in stable, durable government.

The alternatives, which many commentators regard as remote, would be to name someone else to try to form a government or to attempt to keep caretaker Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, who resigned on Jan. 11, in office until the end of June.

Mr. Scalfaro met Chamber of Deputies (lower house) Speaker Irene Pivetti shortly after seeing Mr. Maccanico and was also expected to consult with Senate Speaker Carlo Scognamiglio.

The intractable crisis has embarrassed Italy at a time when it is expected to show leadership through its six-month presidency of the European Union, which ends on June 30.

It has also taken its toll on the economy, with government bonds, shares and the lira all plunging Wednesday as investors took fright at the prospect of yet more instability and a potentially inconclusive return to the polls.

Mr. Berlusconi's centre-right Freedom Alliance and the rival centre-left Olive Tree Bloc undertook when Mr. Maccanico was appointed by Mr. Scalfaro on Feb. 1 to try to seal an accord on far-reaching reforms to give Italy the stability it has lacked.

The big parties in the blocs agreed to work for a French-style system of presidential government but their talks collapsed Tuesday evening over the issue of whether or not the model should be part of Mr. Maccanico's programme.

Mr. D'Alema, whose ex-communist Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) dominates the centre-left, put the bulk of the blame on Mr. Berlusconi's far right ally Gianfranco Fini, widely seen as the politician with the most to gain from an early election.

Mr. Berlusconi, who governed for seven months in 1994, had also pushed hard for a deal and proposed Tuesday that Italians should now be allowed to elect a Constituent Assembly to work on constitutional reform.

The idea was immediately rejected by the PDS, which said a general election was the only way forward.

"The attempt to reach an agreement was only the first half of the match. The second half is elections," Mr. D'Alema said.

Italy, battered by four years of political turmoil since the demise of the corrupt old governing class, last held a general election in March 1994.

It has been without political government since media magnate Berlusconi left office in December 1994. Mr. Dini's government, installed in January 1995, has consisted of unelected technocrats, with parliament splintered into 26 parties.

Dublin officials to meet Sinn Fein soon

BELFAST (R) — The Irish government moved quickly Wednesday to reopen direct low-level contacts with Sinn Fein that were ruptured by a London bomb attack last week by the party's IRA guerrilla allies.

Ireland and Britain, partners in a slow search for peace in Northern Ireland, refuse to hold ministerial talks with Sinn Fein but a meeting is expected between Dublin officials and the party within days, official sources in the Irish capital said.

Irish Prime Minister John Bruton told parliament Tuesday he was willing to authorise a face-to-face meeting at official level.

"This meeting can take place on the basis that Sinn Fein would bring forward their ideas on how the ceasefire can be restored," he told legislators in sombre mood after the bomb which killed two people in London's Dockland financial district.

The move is part of an urgent salvage operation by London and Dublin to resurrect a peace process wrecked by the Irish Republican Army's resumption of warfare after a 17-month truce.

British and Irish officials will meet in London Thursday to try to agree a strategy that will be considered at a prime ministerial summit in the British capital next week.

With both sides edging slowly towards agreement on how to put the peace process back on track, officials say they will do their utmost to iron out deep policy differences.

A major difficulty is the mechanism that will lead to round table peace talks on the future of Northern Ireland. Britain proposes elections in the province to produce a forum that could lead to negotiations among all parties.

Overshadowing all their efforts is the possibility of further IRA violence which would deal a devastating blow to a new drive for peace in the British province.

London and Dublin insist that the IRA, who fought British rule for 25 years until a ceasefire in September 1994, must call a new truce before Sinn Fein can be brought in from the cold again.

British ministers are concerned at how much weight to put on Sinn Fein's ability to persuade the IRA to call a new truce, but Mr. Bruton believes Sinn Fein can coax a second truce from the Republican hardmen.

Sinn Fein leaders say they were completely in the dark about the guerrillas' plans to ditch the truce.

On Tuesday Mr. Bruton softened his stance over his British counterpart John Major's call for elections, but he insists the elections must follow "proximity talks" — a formula used in the Bosnia peace process that would have deeply mistrustful politicians talking under the same roof but not round the same table. He praised Mr. Major's "openness" to new ideas.

Sri Lankan forces destroy Tamil rebel arms ship

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lankan Air Force planes and navy gunboats Wednesday destroyed a ship off the northeastern coast carrying arms for Tamil Tiger guerrillas, military officials said.

Five small craft alongside the arms ship were sunk and the vessel itself was set on fire in the early morning attack, they said.

The vessel was believed to be carrying explosives as well as arms for Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels, who are fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the island's north and east, they said.

"The navy got intelligence about the arms ship Tuesday," a military official told Reuters. "We detected the ship this morning and asked her to surrender but the Tigers refused."

Navy boats opened fire while air force planes bombed the vessel off Mullaitivu, 290 kilometres northeast of Colombo, he said.

A military statement said the rebels fired at navy boats and air force aircraft keeping the vessel under surveillance.

"At this point it was noted that a few small boats approached the ship and some cargo was offloaded from the ship into them," it said.

"The navy and the air force took action to destroy this ship after giving due warning," it said. "A secondary explosion was also observed during this action."

Military officials said they believed explosives on board the vessel had blown up.

Boats manned by the rebels' naval wing, the Sea Tigers, which approached the battle, 12 miles offshore, fired at and hit a Pucara ground attack aircraft but did not cause serious damage, the military officials said.

"LTTE boats are trying to approach the ship, probably to rescue their people. We're fighting them off," a military official said earlier.

The air force and navy stepped up surveillance after an air force plane and fishermen reported seeing a suspected rebel arms ship surrounded by small craft off the southeastern Yala Wildlife Sanctuary Saturday, he said.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga Wednesday said all precautions would be taken to prevent more attacks by the rebels, who she said had been weakened by successive defeats at the hands of the armed forces.

"There is no doubt that they will suffer more defeats in the future," she said in a statement. "The murderous LTTE terrorist organisation is rapidly weakening and disintegrating. The few left might become even more enraged."

The rebels receive most of their weapons from overseas and use the Sea Tigers to send arms and hit squads to the capital Colombo, military officials said.

A rebel suicide bomber blew up Sri Lanka's central bank with a truck packed with 400 kilogrammes of explosives on Jan. 31, killing at least 83 people and wounding more than 1,200.

Security forces Monday found another bomb in a truck parked in a temple on the outskirts of the capital.

The goverment says more than 50,000 people have died in the Tigers' 13-year ethnic war.

Yeltsin, Zyuganov expected to set presidential showdown

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, barring major surprises, will both launch their campaigns for the June 16 presidential elections Thursday.

Mr. Yeltsin, 65, was to fly Wednesday to Yekaterinburg, his home town in the Urals, and everything pointed to an announcement that he will seek four more years in power.

In Moscow, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, 51, was slated to win his party's nomination as presidential candidate at a special party conference Thursday, setting up a bruising showdown between the two men.

Although the president, who is trailing badly in the polls and has a history of poor health, has not made a clear statement yet, he has acted in every other way like a candidate.

On Monday, Mr. Yeltsin looked back over his stormy five years in office and said that "after a difficult start, Russia had entered a period of stabilisation and growth."

Mr. Zyuganov has also not officially announced his candidacy, but there is little doubt he will be picked to lead the Communist Party's bid to ride a wave of discontent over free-market economic reforms and recapture the Kremlin.

The Communists won 22 per cent of the vote in December's parliamentary elections, emerging as by far the strongest party machine in Russia. Their core support comes from the impoverished elderly, used to decades of Soviet social handouts.

Key to the party's success in the presidential vote will be whether the extreme-left groups can unite and agree on Mr. Zyuganov, who is presenting himself as a reformist Communist.

This appeared increasingly likely to happen after about 20 groups, including the hard-left Working Russia, threw their weight behind the mainstream candidate over the weekend.

Other major candidates who have thrown their hat into the ring are extreme-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky, nationalist retired General Alexander Lebed and liberal leader Grigory Yavlinsky.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who is seen as representing continuity, but having less enemies than Mr. Yeltsin, has loyally declared he will not run as long as Mr. Yeltsin is in the race.



Police officers carry ballot boxes out of their station for transportation to polling centres Wednesday in Dhaka. Preparations for the Feb. 15 general election are being finalised throughout the country, and security ahead of the opposition-boycotted polls is tight (Reuter photo)

Strike, blasts precede Bangladesh polls

DHAKA (R) — Convoys of soldiers put on a huge show of force in the Bangladeshi capital Wednesday on the eve of general elections but dozens of home-made bomb blasts and a general strike kept tension high.

"It looks like as though the city is under martial law," one Dhaka resident said.

The army took control of law and order after authorities banned political activities from midnight Tuesday in an effort to ensure peaceful voting after a violent campaign in which 16 people have died and 500 wounded this month.

Opposition parties are boycotting the poll, alleging it will be rigged to ensure victory for Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

The BNP is the only big party contesting the election, although a host of mostly obscure groups are also taking part.

The election is a test of strength between Bangladesh's two charismatic women leaders — Mrs. Khaleda, who is Bangladesh's first woman prime minister, and Awami League head Sheikh Hasina, who denounces her rival as a power-hungry autocrat.

As the hours ticked by to the start of voting, dozens of home-made bombs exploded in Dhaka, witnesses said. Police responded by firing teargas at the bombers.

A two-day general strike starting Wednesday meant that rickshaws were the only transport available. All businesses were shut and while government offices kept their doors open, few civil servants turned up for work.

"The strike is holding very tight," one resident in Chittagong port city said, adding that the city was rocked by sporadic bomb blasts.

Strikers pulled up rail lines, erected barricades on highways and fought with government supporters, reports from around the country said.

Mrs. Khaleda told reporters Tuesday she was determined to go ahead with the election, but she might resume talks with her opponents after the poll.

Her rival Sheikh Hasina told reporters Tuesday night she believed the people would frustrate the "one-party election" by not voting.

The government said all preparations were complete for voting Thursday, but opponents questioned this assertion.

Civil servants said Tuesday they would not perform polling duties because of a lack of security.

Reports from Dinajpur, north of Dhaka, said hundreds of poll officials have had themselves admitted to hospital to avoid election duties.

But a government spokesman Tuesday night denied that civil servants had refused to perform election duties.

Elsewhere the position on readiness for the polls was unclear. "There are still no visible preparations for the election," one official in northern Rajshahi city said Tuesday. "We have not been told where the polling centres will be."

S. Korea orders exercises in disputed islets after sighting Japanse boat

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea Wednesday ordered air and navy exercises around disputed islets in the Japan Sea after sighting a Japanese patrol boat in the area, reducing hopes of a quick diplomatic solution to the row.

The Defence Ministry said the joint military drills would be staged in the area Thursday, with navy ships and fighters simulating an attack on a "possible territorial intrusion."

The announcement of the air and naval drills came immediately after the presence of a Japanese fishing maritime patrol boat was confirmed in the vicinity of the disputed Tokdo Islets.

The Japanese boat was spotted sailing 17 nautical miles west of Tokdo, on the Japanese side of the theoretical mid-point sea line, prompting South Korean patrol boats to scramble and tail it.

"Today at 1520 (0620 GMT), 17 miles west of Tokdo, Japanese patrol ship PM-85 spotted by navy ship 771. Maritime police tracing radar and monitoring," read an urgent navy message relayed to AFP by police.

A tense standoff has been building between Seoul and Tokyo over the islets, known here as Tokdo and in Japan as Takeshima, prompting alarm in Washington, which has appealed for a negotiated solution.

Wednesday's sea incident clouded moves by Seoul and Tokyo to avert a diplomatic showdown over the row, which erupted last week when Tokyo reasserted its claim to Tokdo, midway between the two nations.

"There is no point in provoking them if Japan does not make an issue of it," a South Korean Foreign Ministry official told AFP.

The official refused to comment on news reports that Tokyo may delay announcing its exclusive 200-nautical-mile economic zone to defuse growing tension with Seoul.

But his comment reflected South Korea's softened position that the Tokdo issue could be excluded from negotiations between the two nations on the overlapping part of their economic zones.

Japan has promised to give prior notice to South Korea on its decision, he said, asking for caution in handling the escalating row, which has triggered a furor in Seoul.

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Solution through return

THE SEVENTH session of the quadripartite Committee on Displaced (Palestinian) Persons meeting in Cairo this week got bogged down for the seventh time on the definition of a Palestinian displaced person who fled his or her home in the wake of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Under the 1993 self-rule accords between Israel and the PLO, the return of the Palestinians displaced in 1967 was supposed to have begun prior to the start of the final status peace talks between the two sides in May of this year. However, and despite the many attempts that have been made so far to set the process of the repatriation of the affected Palestinians in motion, the committee is still discussing basics and remains nowhere near the completion of its agenda.

The problem lies squarely in differences between the parties on the number of the people forced out of their homes and lands in 1967. At a time when Israel puts the number of these Palestinians at 200,000, Palestinian sources estimate them to be well over 750,000. The United Nations, on the other hand, maintains that there were some 350,000 Palestinians who left the West Bank in 1967.

The Israeli and the U.N. numbers obviously do not take into full account the natural growth of the displaced persons' population over the past 20 years. Israel in particular takes a very conservative view of what constitutes close relatives of the people in question with the end result being continuous wrangling about an issue that should have been agreed upon a long time ago.

If the return of these people does not begin soon, there will be even greater suspicion that Israel is not serious about resolving their problem. And if Israel cannot agree to their return, not much can be expected of it when the even more thorny subject of Palestinian refugees who fled their country in 1948 comes up for negotiations this year.

This leads us to believe that perhaps the Israeli government seeks to broker a one-shot deal involving both the displaced as well as the refugees and therefore is foot-dragging over the former category of Palestinians. But any attempt to lump together the two dimensions would be counterproductive.

For one thing, while the refugees of 1948 are most probably destined to seek compensation and not repatriation to Israel where their homes and properties still exist, the displaced Palestinians of 1967 seek their return to the West Bank where a Palestinian national government has assumed control. Then there is the insulting Israeli proposal to repatriate only 4,000 displaced Palestinians annually. At this rate, it would be well over half a century to repatriate the existing number, not to mention their children and grandchildren.

As if to add insult to injury, the Israeli delegation to the Cairo meeting offered limiting repatriation to only four categories of Palestinians, thereby excluding a big percentage of people including those who once lived in East Jerusalem or those whose lands were confiscated to make room for Jewish settlements.

Such criteria cannot be acceptable since they run counter to the principle of repatriation that the parties have agreed to at the outset.

Jordan is just as keen as the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to find an equitable resolution to the displaced Palestinians and has a stake in early solution. This applies equally to other Arab countries which still play host to thousands of Palestinians yearning to return to their homeland. Above all we all need to see a real movement in this direction so that the peace that we seek can be found and consolidated all around.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A COLUMNIST for **Al Ra'i** daily criticised what he called "extra baggage" in the present government, saying that 12 ministers are more than enough for handling the executive authority. Sultan Al Hattab said China, with more than 1,000 million inhabitants, has a cabinet not exceeding 31 and there was no need for Jordan to have a similar number as there is no real need for several ministries, including the position of minister of state. There is no need for deputies to become ministers; and if the future Cabinet will be formed from deputies and in so many numbers, more people will be nominating themselves to run for Parliament in future elections in order to assume a ministerial portfolio rather than do service to the countrymen, said the writer. However, one should expect from the new Cabinet to direct its attention towards solving the many chronic problems facing the country;

MOHAMMAD DAOUD, a writer for **Al Dustour**, demanded that the government introduce stricter measures in dealing with drug trafficking. In the past years, the government used to claim that Jordan is not a consumer of drugs but that its territory is being used for drug trafficking, said the writer. He said now that the numbers of drugs addicts are increasing by the day the concerned authorities should revise the present measures and take deterrent action against this dangerous habit. While recognising and appreciating the work of the police and the customs officers in fighting off smuggling and drug trafficking, it is also important to emphasise the need for firmer methods to deal with the situation. It is important to note here that drug addiction has been mostly reported among the non-Jordanian workers in the country as it has been found that they do not only use the drugs themselves, they pass the habit on to local people.

The View From Academia

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

Viewing history from the right angle

THERE IS something seriously wrong with the way we read, teach, conceive, respond and ultimately stand in relation to our own past. Even though our intense awareness of it generally endows us with much that we are thankful for, our nostalgic attachment to it and exaggerated deference of it often result in undesirable, counterproductive and harmful consequences.

There is no doubt that a nation's history is part and parcel of its very being, a crucial component of its overall identity. For the most part, the past does not die. Only the inconsequential events and happenings are forgotten. The important experiences, on the other hand, continue not only to exist but also to affect and shape the present. To a nation, the past or history is much like memory, consciousness or the subconscious to an individual; deprive him of it, and you have either amnesia or psychological disorder. What is a person like without memory or without consciousness? In other words, the past can neither be totally amputated or negated nor reduced or marginalised.

But it should not be overestimated or exaggerated either. Worship of the past, like the attempt to reduce it or negate it, is a heresy and a big mistake. Nations which make it their sole business to "build the sepulchres of the fathers" (in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson) or live totally according to the criteria, ideals and dictates of the past are either not living their present at all or are barely alive. If memory or the subconscious becomes a little too tempting or attractive to an individual, the result is loss of touch with reality — hallucination or hysteria.

For a healthy relationship with the past to materialise, what is needed is balance. A nation has to be simultaneously attached and detached, complimentary and critical, concerned about the past and deeply involved in the present, etc. It is true that the past is important psychologically but it is also important intellectually: as fiction, poetry, art and movies teach us, people love to picture it, to recreate it, to travel to it, to indulge in it (and this is good for their psyche); but as archaeology, anthropology, theology and history teach us also, people study it and learn from it. Our intellectual need of history is as important (if not more important) as our psychological need. We benefit a lot, I believe, from an honest scrutiny and perusal of the past. Not only will our own image of it become more accurate and reliable, we will also be able to shape our present more wisely, and perhaps efficiently and skilfully. Past mistakes and failings can help us deal with present reality as much as the moments of past success and glory.

As for our own relationship with our past, I wish to suggest the following reading. By "our past," I mean the Arabic/Islamic tradition from, say, the first century to the end of the nineteenth. The twentieth century, for the vast majority of us, exists in our present memory and consciousness.

The vast majority of people in the Arab World of today have a problematic relationship with the past. First of all, there are those (70 per cent I would say) who are extremely attached to the good old days and ways. To them, everything in the past is almost entirely glorious, bright and right; everything in the present is decidedly inferior, unacceptable and wrong. Their attachment to the past is essentially a reaction against the present, against the series of disappointments, failures and tragic events which the twentieth century has brought with it. Many of them are not blind to the achievements and successes of the present; but to them such achievements and successes are ultimately isolated, inconsistent, limited and marginal. The past provides them (and rightly so) with a sense of optimism, security, self-importance and pride. They think about it and indulge in it, primarily because it makes them "feel good" about themselves. In this sense, the past is sought for the healing power which it brings with it.

But such understandable positive effect translates into a negative consequence. The attraction soon grows into addiction and the love turns into worship. As present disappointments increase and frustrations mount, the past offers an opportunity for escape. It would not be an exaggeration to say that a comfortable majority of people in the Arab World of today live life absent-mindedly. Their body is in the present, their soul is in the past. Rather than face the present, confront it courageously and do something effective about it, they either simply neglect it entirely or do what they have to do casually, disinterestedly, inefficiently and carelessly — just enough to get buy.

This explains, in part, the lack of commitment, efficiency, professionalism and excellence among most of us. It is indeed interesting, and at times sad and tragic, to see those who praise and love our fathers and forefathers for their successes and glorious achievements perform their tasks unsuccessfully and ingloriously. The explanation is simple: a) *these people actually live in the past, not the present;* b) as these people see themselves an extension of the fathers (not as autonomous, independent entities), they judge themselves by what the fathers have done and not by what they themselves do. Otherwise, how would you explain the behaviour of a car mechanic who preaches so insistently about the importance of following in the steps of Omar Bin Al Khattab or Salah Al Deen while doing an extremely miserable job on your car, of a civil servant who interrupts official business to pray (and prays devotedly) and then comes back to abuse the citizens standing in line, or of a husband who argues enthusiastically Islam's meek, respectful and healthy attitude towards women and then abuses his wife? After all, "we" (meaning actually our fathers and forefathers) are the greatest of all peoples and nations. The past makes "us" feel good the way alcohol makes some feel high. When its temporary influence is over, we are where we are. Why then should we care about the present or about our performance in it?

Worse than this, and as a result of our perverse relationship with the past, a schizophrenic situation emerges. I, the Arab of the present world, am actually two persons in one, two entities at once, two selves: I am simultaneously a present and a past self, a dwarf (in the present) and a giant (in the past), a failure and a success, a talker and a doer; I am my father and I am myself. When I want to brag and boast, I am my father; when I want to condemn and put down, I am myself.

When people belonging to this category teach us our history or write or talk to us about it, they essentially teach us the following: the fathers are giants, we are dwarfs; they are glorious, we are failures. Our history is basically built on eulogic, deferential and reverential rhetoric, and not an analysis. We do not study, examine, weigh and assess; we idealise, idolise, praise, sing and worship. The forefathers are not human beings with virtues and vices (clearly, more virtues than vices) but supernatural beings.

As a result of such exaggerated perception, we get very little (if any) from history that is actually helpful to us — aside from feeling good or feeling bad, gigantic or dwarfish, that is. To individuals who view history thus, salvation or progress lies, paradoxically, in "going back" to the good old days. The ways of the fathers and forefathers are the best. Obviously, such position is regressive and reactionary.

A significant minority (20 per cent) holds an opposite view. Like the majority above, its members are generally disappointed with the present. But, unlike the majority of the 70 per cent, they see little hope coming from the past. To them, the glories of the past are either exaggerated or entirely fake. The past is both intolerable and dead, and they see no value in disturbing it. Salvation lies in rejecting the past totally and turning our backs to it, in "burying" the fathers and the forefathers for good, and in adopting some models of success from outside the Arabic-Islamic culture. What members of this category are after is to amputate the past and negate it, and thus deprive us of our memory and induce in us a state of amnesia. When *they teach us history, they are immensely reductive of it; they make fun of the fathers and forefathers and dwell primarily on their failings.*

Only a tiny minority (10 per cent) looks at the past and present critically and realistically and sees salvation in a marriage which reconciles the positive ways of the fathers and some workable present-day models. There is sense in what they say, analysis, logic, evidence, real argument, true self-examination and beautiful synthesis of dialectical relations or oppositional views. If you are lucky, you attend the lessons given by teachers belonging to this category, read books written by them, or listen to tales told by them. The problem is that they are too small a minority to effect the desired impact.

Presently then, we are facing a real dilemma in the manner we stand in relation to our past. The majority is foolishly romantic, and the significant minority is hopelessly misguided. What we have is not plurality or diversity of opinion (as some may mistakingly conclude) but fragmented conception and vision. The solution lies in giving strength and popularity to the perspective of the tiny 10 per cent and in enabling them to play their role. We have to look for them and give them our full support, for they, and only they, can guide us and save us from the confusion we are in. We are fed up with myths, romances and old wives' tales — pro or con. History is facts, details, analysis and synthesis.

The tilting balance of U.S. favouritism

By G.H. Jansen

BY CONTINUING its long-standing policy of picking favourites, the U.S. has once again managed to offend and alienate a potential ally and make life difficult for U.S. citizens operating in that country.

This time the offended country is Greece. And the cause of the offence is last month's crisis over the rocky islets in the Aegean which brought Greece and Turkey to the brink of war.

Both Greece and Turkey claim ownership of the rocky islets of Imia seven miles off the coast of Turkey and 20 miles from Greece in the Dodecanese archipelego. At the end of January, the two countries gathered forces, warships, planes and a handful of commandos on their separate shores in preparation for a military confrontation over the islets. During a long night of negotiation both sides were persuaded to stand down by the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke. They both withdrew handfuls of troops deployed on the islands and lowered flags they had raised over herds of goats, the only inhabitants.

Unfortunately, for the proud and prickly Greeks the lowering of the Greek flag was seen as a great affront because Greece has exercised sovereignty over the islets since the end of World War II. There was an internal crisis in the country which happened to coincide with a visit from Mr. Holbrooke, fresh from his mediatory triumphs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Aegean. The aim of this visit - to Athens, Ankara and Nicosia - was to sort out the Cyprus problem.

Greece, alleging a clash of timetables, informed Mr. Holbrooke that his visit was not feasible. Snubbed by Greece, he cancelled his visit to the three capitals, postponing the U.S. "big push" towards a Cyprus settlement, delivering a countersnub to Greece and punishing Cyprus.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, perhaps unwittingly, added insult to injury by sending a letter to caretaking Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, congratulating Turkey for showing "statesmanlike restraint" during the crisis, a letter which Turkey publicised. Although a similar letter was, reportedly, sent to Athens, it was not broadcast, giving rise to suspicion that it was unwelcome because it reiterated a U.S. demand that the two sides "negotiate" a solution to the dispute over islets Greece has, for 50 years, considered part of its sovereign territory.

The Greeks promptly and loudly complained that this was one more example of U.S. favouritism towards Turkey in preference to Greece, a preference which Washington has clearly demonstrated.

This case showed, once again, that U.S. interests are not served by such preferences which do not amount to a coherent foreign policy. Besides favouring Turkey over Greece, the U.S. leans in the direction of Pakistan rather than of India and of Israel rather than of the 22 Arabs states.

Defending its tilt towards Turkey and arguing solely in the context of military advantage, the U.S. points out that Turkey is a much larger country than Greece, has more people, and that, geographically, vis-à-vis Russia and the newly emerging Central Asian republics, Turkey is more strategically and advantageously situated since it has one foot in southeast Europe and one in the Middle East. However, the apologists for the tilt forget that without Greece, the key to the Balkans, there would be no European land connection with Turkey.

Demographic and geographic arguments should favour India over Pakistan but do not. Nor does the argument that India is the world's largest democracy create much enthusiasm in Washington for the charms of Delhi. But ever since India gained its independence, India and America have been antagonists. Party of this antagonism can be explained by differences in national psyche as well as diverging politco-economic policies. The U.S. has never accepted the fact that India, because of its long national struggle, is not only independent but is independent-minded. This has meant that India has consistently refused to accept domination by any outside power or powers. During the cold war India conceived of and fostered non-alignment, a policy the former U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles roundly denounced as "immoral" because India refused to take Washington's side against "international Communism".

Furthermore, India and individual Indians are too critical and argumentative, over-sensitive and prickly, just like the Greeks and the Arabs, to appeal to Washington, while Turkey and Pakistan are prepared to accept U.S. leadership and domination.

Of course, U.S. favouritism between the Arabs and Israelis is a special case flowing from the total dependence of the U.S. political establishment on the American Zionist lobby which ensures that Washington follows an anti-Arab, pro-Israel policy which is clearly inimical to the national interests of the U.S.

But because of its various tilts and favourtisms, U.S. officials and ordinary American citizens are now at risk or unwelcome not only in Greece, but also in several Middle Eastern countries. These include Iran and Iraq, Afghanistan and the Sudan, Syria and Lebanon and Algeria and Libya. And Americans have recently been warned about anti-U.S. sentiment in Washington's closest Gulf ally, Saudi Arabia.

The U.S. was warned, half a century ago, about its preference for Israel over the Arabs by the then Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, but policy makers ignored his warnings, to the great and increasing cost of U.S. relations with countries and peoples not blessed with Washington's favours.

Gulf rulers seek to rein in Qatar's maverick emir

By Kathy Evans

THE NEW emir of the tiny Gulf state of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, is under pressure from other ruling families in the Gulf to "see the error of his ways" and fall into line with "traditional" foreign and domestic policies.

The principal pawn in the hands of the Gulf states is the emir's father, Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani, whom he overthrew last summer. Since then, Sheikh Khalifa has toured Arab states seeking support for his efforts to return as emir. He has now been offered a home in Abu Dhabi, less than 200 miles from the Qatari border.

According to high-level sources in Qatar, the deposed emir still controls an estimated $3 billion (£1.98 billion) of the emirate's financial reserves, which he refuses to hand back. Qatar is having difficulty paying its bills and financing the huge investment required to develop its extensive gas reserves.

It is not only the content but the style of Sheikh Hamad's rule that has upset his Gulf allies.

Unlike other Gulf kings and emirs, Sheikh Hamad regularly talks to the press, explaining his policies and ideas. The others keep aloof from their people and rarely feel the need to explain policies. Sheikh Hamad has also ended censorship of the media and, to the alarm of other emirs, talks of allowing the election of a national assembly.

Sheikh Hamad, aged 46, has sought better relations with Iran and Iraq, both of which are viewed with suspicion by other Gulf states. Despite public warnings from the Saudis, he has also sought closer relations with Israel. Other Gulf states want the question of commercial ties with Israel put on hold until a comprehensive peace treaty is agreed by all Arab states. But Sheikh Hamad wants to sign an important gas deal with Israel.

The last straw for his allies came at the Gulf summit two months ago when Sheikh Hamad walked out in protest at the appointment of a Saudi national to head the regional Gulf Cooperation Council. Sheikh Hamad's protest was the first effective challenge by any Gulf state to the Big Brother role played by Saudi Arabia in the region.

Last week the emir's "sins" were compounded by his decision to let the Bahraini opposition movement appear on Qatar state television. The interview coincided with an upsurge in unrest in Bahrain and the detention of hundreds of religious leaders and activists campaigning for the renewal of parliamentary democracy.

"This guy in Qatar is pushing it," a prominent Saudi information official said. "It's not that we want to overthrow him — that would be too much of a precedent — but we just want him to behave, and see the error of his ways."

The Gulf states now appear to be getting back at the young emir by favouring his father, Sheikh Khalifa is ensconced in Abu Dhabi's lavish International Hotel. But according to local reports, two new palaces in the Abu Dhabi city suburbs have been earmarked for the former ruler, who is still treated as a head of state.

Qatari officials play down suggestions that the loss of financial reserves is affecting the economy.

"There is cash in the name of the previous emir, but this can't affect our progress and projects. Our country is a rich country," the foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim, said.

Yet business sources in the Qatari capital Doha said contractors were months behind in receiving payment, and civil servants were being paid out of the local telephone company's receipts. In October the emirate had to take a loan of $300 million (£198 million) from international banks to pay its bills.

"The liquidity problems have been around for some time, but they are compounded by the need to put up about $1 billion for the gas development project," a Western diplomat in Doha said. "Any outside money would come in extremely useful now."

Under the old Gulf tradition, however, there is no distinction between national income and that of the emir. All oil income goes to the emir before being distributed to government ministries.

The Guardian

Society on the Move

Talk about the challenge of change

Prince Raad Bin Zeid will turn 60 this Sunday. Born in Berlin on Feb. 18, 1936 to Prince Zeid Bin Hussein and Princess Fakhrenissa Zeid, Prince Raad completed his elementary education in Baghdad and his secondary education at Victoria College in Alexandria. In 1956, he matriculated at Christ's College, Cambridge University, to read for a degree in Oriental studies. The Prince received his B.A. with honours in 1960 and his M.A. in 1963, both from Cambridge. Prince Raad, who is His Majesty King Hussein's Chief Chamberlain, is president of the Friendship Society for the Blind, the Friendship Society for the Jordan Eye Bank and the Sports Federation for the Handicapped. He is also president of the Royal Commission for the Restoration of the Shrines of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad, the Petra National Trust, and the Jordan Amateur Radio Association. In addition, Prince Raad is a member of the Board of the National Council for the Disabled and vice president of the American Centre for Oriental Research. From 1965 to 1974 he was president of the Jordanian Olympic Committee. The Prince has been awarded the Al Nahda Medal of the First Order from King Hussein. In 1963 Prince Raad married Princess Majda (formerly Margareta Lind of Sweden). The couple have four sons and one daughter: Princes Zeid, Mired, Firas and Faisal, and Princess Fukhrenissa. Prince Mired married Princess Dina (formerly Dina Khalifeh) in 1992. The young couple have a daughther, Princess Shirin and a son, Prince Rakan. A very happy 60th and all best wishes!

Moving again? *Minister of Information Marwan Muasher, not exactly following in the footsteps of his predecessor, was said to be moving his office to the Prime Ministry. The move, we discover, is actually only partial. Dr. Muasher is setting up "an office" there because it is important for him to be in close physical proximity to the prime minister simply to constantly be in the know. But the step is also seen as a confirmation of the intent to gradually phase-out the Ministry of Information through the passage of legislation. The phase-out is not likely to affect the employment of the ministry's 60-odd staff because they will most probably be transferred to other official information departments in various government institutions. Then maybe everyone will be happy.*

The major and minor: *And over at Jordan Television itself, Director Nasser Judeh says "minor" changes have taken place, and more "significant" changes aimed at improving JTV standards can be expected in the next few weeks. The change we can tell you about is that Mureed Hammad has been made acting head of news, and former head of news Mohammad Saeed Bermament will move to a new position (which is still unclear) either within JTV or without. Mr. Hammad, who has been with the station for 15 years, was made senior chief editor of news just over a year ago. Before that, he was chief editor and head of English news for five years.*

Happy hosts: *Kuwait's chargé d'affaires in Amman, Faisal Suleiman Mkhaizim, and Mrs. Mkhaizim are hosting a reception at the Forte Grand Hotel on Feb. 25. The event will mark the 35th anniversary of Kuwait's national day, and, by the way, the first reception of its kind hosted by the embassy since the Gulf Crisis. On the invitation list are senior officials, members of the diplomatic corps, university presidents, newspaper chief editors and other dignitaries. Sources in Amman who have been saying that relations between the Kingdom and Kuwait have been warming up at a swift pace of late, would appear to be on target. In fact, an embassy insider said "little things such as this reception" could be an indication of things to come.*

A labour of love: *Praising the recent work of Fouad Mimi and Jordan Television, which has won the film producer international acclaim at both the 1995 Casablanca Cultural Fair and the Arab Television Fair in Tunis, Her Majesty Queen Noor said "This worldwide recognition of your efforts is a testimony to Jordan's leading role and accomplishments and stresses the Kingdom's quest for creativity and innovation in the cultural arts." Mr. Mimi, along with his partner of 13 years executive director/painter Adnan Al Ali, shared in the research for the 30-minute documentary on the Koran, its calligraphy, and to what extent calligraphy has influenced modern art. Several years ago Mr. Ali directed and presented a 13-episode documentary on mosaics. The Mimi/Ali production, entitled "Arabic Calligraphy" was aired on Jordan Television (JTV) last November, to mark His Majesty King Hussein's 60th birthday. Mr. Mimi has a colourful background in creativity. He studied in London with BBC and at St. Martins College of Fine Arts. He is a printer, painter, and collector of art and antiques. During the last 20 years he has worked as a film producer, writer, and fashion designer. He has even spent time with French haute couture designer Yves St. Laurent in Paris. In the more recent past, though, he says, he has been focusing on producing documentaries, including one for the Office of Queen Noor entitled "Facts About Jordan, and another, called "On the Banks of the Jordan," about artists who travelled to the lands of Palestine and Jordan during the 18th and 19th centuries. Mr. Mimi works with JTV on a free-lance basis and says that in the last seven to eight years he has immersed himself in his painting. In a letter of congratulations to Mr. Mimi, Queen Noor said, "Your expertise in this field and the production of such documentaries has been and will be greatly appreciated in Jordan and will continue to be a source of pride for me and our precious country."*

Familiar surroundings: *New Indian Ambassador to Jordan Gajanan Wakankar is not all that new to the Kingdom. He actually arrived here last October to attend the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit, stayed on for a while afterwards, then took a home leave before returning again. One of the five ambassadors to present credentials to His Majesty King Hussein more that a week ago, Mr. Wakankar says he had the honour to meet the King on three previous occasions while with the Indian diplomatic service — once in Bahrain and twice in Oman. His career began with military service during the Indo-China war of 1962-63. He joined the foreign service in 1969 and has served in Iran, Bahrain and Libya. His first ambassadorial post was to Guyana from 1985 to 1986. From there he returned to the Middle East (his speciality) to serve as ambassador to Oman. From 1992 until his appointment to Jordan, he served as consul general (with the rank of ambassador) to India's mission to the United Nations in New York. Mr. Wakankar is interested in reading, gardening and community activities. He plays squash and tennis, and practices yoga. He is married to Neela Wakankar, a science and mathematics graduate with a keen interest in community service and related activities. The couple have two children, a son (27) and a daughter (21), who are both studying abroad. Mr. Wakankar, who was born in central India in 1940, says he speaks "some Arabic," but is more confident about his reading and writing abilities. It is no wonder then that he says he has had many occasions with Jordanian and Palestinian diplomats and associates and good relations with many friends in the Middle East. We welcome the Wakankars and wish them a memorable stay.*

Diplomacy & Conservation: *Also last week, presenting his credentials for the first time as an ambassador of his country, was Ahmet Suha Umar of Turkey. Born in Istanbul, the 50-year-old Ambassador Umar received his B.A. in political science for the University of Ankara and has had a diplomatic career centred primarily on international security and cooperation. His foreign postings have included Argentina, Bulgaria and Austria. From 1978 to 1983 he was counsellor of the permanent mission of Turkey to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, and later, from 1985 to 1988 he held the same post of Turkey's permanent mission to NATO. Between 1989 and 1991 he served as deputy permanent representative to Turkey's mission to the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and deputy chief negotiator for the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. From 1991 to 1992 he was head of the Military Affairs Department of the NATO Department. Until his appointment as ambassador, he served as deputy director general of the Multilateral Security & Disarmament Department. Ambassador Umar is married and reported to be an avid hunter and fisherman. As a dedicated conservationists he is currently president of the influential Game and Wildlife Conservation Development and Promotion Foundation of Turkey. He has published tens of articles in various Turkish and foreign magazines on hunting, fishing and nature conservation, as well as articles on travel and travelling. A friendly welcome to the Umars.*

Taking care of business: *The J.T. has its own ambassador of sorts to congratulate. His name is Odeh Hussein Abu Susein of our Advertising Department, and he was appointed by former Minister of Youth Awad Khleifat as president of the Jerash Refugee Camp Club, know as the Ghazet Hashim club. The move to appoint Abu Susein came nearly a year after the previous minister, Abdullah Aweidat, had disband the club's board because the ministry, which governs all such clubs, said internal conflicts between the board members was precluding them from fulfilling their duties. Perhaps one of his last directives as minister of youth, and before taking his oath as minister of interior, Dr. Khleifat selected Abu Susein to be president and approved of seven other individuals to work together as a caretaker committee until the club holds elections on July 25. Abu Susein, who happened to be vice-president on the disband board, says he will run in the coming elections and is confident of winning. The Ghazet Hashim club organises cultural, social and sports activities, and oversees aid to the camp's orphans. It recently collected JD 27,000 in donations and with the money built a multipurpose recreational facility for use by the camps 25,000 residents.*

Jennifer Hamarneh

Hollywood studios cash in on Oscar nominations

By Dean Goodman
Reuter

LOS ANGELES — The Hollywood studios responsible for such newly annointed Oscar nominees as Braveheart, Sense And Sensibility and The Postman wasted no time in launching a publicity blitz to cash in on their success.

These three films, along with Apollo 13 and Babe, picked up best picture nominations when the lists were unveiled Tuesday at a glittering pre-dawn ceremony packed with surprises.

Leading the pack, with 10 nominations, was Braveheart, whose star Mel Gibson earned a nod for best director. The three-hour mediaeval epic, in which the movie idol plays a Scottish rebel leader, is being re-released in 800 movie theatres across the United States this weekend.

Gibson learned the news when an assistant gave him a hand signal while filming his movie Ransom in New York. He smiled and went right on shooting the scene.

Hoping to capitalise on the massive publicity generated by the Oscar nominations, studio publicists rushed to prepare full-page newspaper ads and television spots to remind moviegoers how their films are deserving of Hollywood's highest accolades.

The Oscars — to be voted on by more than 5,000 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences — will be handed out on March 25.

Apollo 13, based on the true-life story of an abortive space mission, won nine nominations. However its director Ron Howard was overlooked, as was Tom Hanks, who won the best actor Oscars for the past two years. Instead, Ed Harris and Kathleen Quinlan won nods for their supporting roles.

The clear frontrunner for best actor is Nicolas Cage, for his portrayal of a Hollywood executive who decides to drink himself to death in Leaving Las Vegas.

"Nobody had any idea in their wildest dreams. This is a film that almost didn't get released," Cage said of the low-budget drama. It cost $3.5 million to make and has grossed more than $15 million in the United States.

Cage is up against Massimo Troisi in The Postman, Richard Dreyfuss in Mr. Holland's Opus, Anthony Hopkins in Nixon and Sean Penn in Dead Man Walking.

Cage's co-star Elisabeth Shue, who played a prostitute, received a best actress nod, and Mike Figgis earned a nomination for directing the film.

Shue's rivals are Emma Thompson for Sense And Sensibility, Meryl Streep in The Bridges Of Madison County, Sharon Stone in Casino and Susan Sarandon in Dead Man Walking.

"I'm just happy I'm not nominated with any pigs," said Sarandon, referring to the porcine crowd-pleaser Babe, which received seven nominations.

Another surprise was the five nominations for Italy's The Postman, the first foreign-language nominee for best picture in 22 years. Massimo Troisi was nominated for best actor raising the possibility of the first posthumous award since Peter Finch won for Network in 1976. Troisi died of heart failure at 41 the day after filming ended.

Emma Thompson also received a screenplay nomination for Sense And Sensibility, which she adapted from the Jane Austen classic. But Taiwanese-born director Ang Lee was omitted from the best director category.

Columbia Pictures, which released Sense And Sensibility, plans to have the film on 1,050 screens by Friday, having launched it on 66 screens on Dec. 13.

"Our entire marketing campaign was laid out to take advantage of these awards and happily we were right," said studio spokesman Ed Russell. Its other nominations included best supporting actress (Kate Winslet).

Foreign-language film nominees are: All Things Fair (Sweden), Antonia's Line (Netherlands), Dust Of Life (Algeria), O Quatrilho (Brazil) and Star Maker (Italy).



Mel Gibson (centre) and cast members in a scene from the film Braveheart. The film received nominations for Best Picture, Best Director, Best original screenplay and seven other categories when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced its Oscar nominations Tuesday (Reuter photo)



Meryl Streep in a scene from the film The Bridges Of Madison County. Streep was nominated for a Best Actress award when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences made its Oscar nominations Tuesday (Reuter photo)



Cast members MassimoTroisi (left), Philippe Noiret (centre) and Maria Grazia Cucinotta in a scene from the film The Postman. The film received a nomination for Best Picture and Troisi, who died after the filming was completed, received a nomination for Best Actor when the Oscar nominations were announced(Reuter photo)

Not again!

By Jean-Claude Elias

chip talk



WHEN A NEW version of PC software is released, it is usually seen as a blessing by those anxiously waiting for it and a curse by all others, perfectly happy with old versions, and tired of learning new tricks.

Mastering new versions of commonly used application programmes (Quattro, Word, Excel, dBASE, etc.) has become almost a routine for PC aficionados. However the launching last autumn of Microsoft Windows 95 operating system forced many users to a major change in their computing habits. Even today, five months after its release, Windows 95 has not replaced its predecessor, Windows 3.1, on everybody's machine. There is little doubt that Windows 95 is "better" than the old version. Overall it is faster, friendlier and more adapted to meet the challenge of future software applications. And it does look much better.

A British computer magazine has just announced that Microsoft will put Windows 96 on the market before the summer. Far from being a joke, the news has sent waves of disbelief among the huge community of PC users. A new operating system? Not again!

Actually it is not a new system. Windows 96 won't be to Windows 95 what Windows 95 was to Windows 3.1. This is not going to be a major change or a new design. Microsoft are only adjusting a few "things" here and there to make the whole system more dependable. Whereas the word bug (programming error) should not be used lightly in this case, nobody having any proof of that, it seems that some of the functions, probably minor elements, require fine tuning.

The news should even be considered as good — as a confirmation of the continuous undiminished support of Microsoft to its users. Technically speaking, there is therefore nothing to fear. Those who have already installed Windows 95 on their hard disk will be given a simple, quick, upgrade to Windows 96. All what they learned remains valid and the screens, the system menus and the functions are unchanged.

On the other hand, all those who decided to wait a little before adopting Windows 95 must be smiling, and the Arab World is still waiting for a bilingual (Arabic-English) Windows 95 — er... sorry, 96.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Feb. 15, 1996

1:00 Fireman Sam
1:10 Disney's Aladdin
1:30 The Legends Of Treasure Islands
2:00 My Secret Identity
2:15 NBA
3:15 The New Leave It To Beaver
3:40 Adventures Of The Old West
4:30 Gillette World Sport Special
5:00 French Programme
Documentary
Un Jour Une Fete
5:30 Varieties
Taratata
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Archimede
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Keeping Up Appearances
8:10 Islam In America
9:10 Pride And Prejudice
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45 Feature film
12:00 Matlock

Friday, Feb. 16, 1996

1:00 The Pebbles & The Bamm Bamm Show
1:30 Iris—The Happy Professor
1:45 Lift Off
2:05 See How They Grow
2:15 Bush School
2:30 Wonder Why
3: 00 Movies
4:30 Give Us a Clue
5:00 French Programme
Magazine
E=M6
5:30 Film
Elle Voulait Faire Du Cinema
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Allo La Terre
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Short Story Cinema
8:00 Sea Quest
8:45 America's Funniest People
9:10 Widows
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:45 Second Chances
11:30 Classic Movie

Saturday, Feb. 17, 1996

2:00 Moomins
2:30 Wish Kid
3:00 Harry And The Hendersons
3:25 Blue Heelers
4:00 Okavango
5:00 French Programme
Documentary
Omnisciences
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Serie
Chateau Vallon
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Faut Pas Rever
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Major Dad
8:00 Stamp Of Greatness
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 A Fine Romance
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land of Islam
10:45 Feature film
11:50 Mancuso FBI

Sunday, Feb. 18 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Disney's Aladdin
3:00 Family Playhouse
3:25 Pugwall's Summer
3:50 Islamic History In Jordan
4:10 Okavango
5:00 French Programme
Documentary
Des Plantes Et Des Hommes
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Magazine
Envoye Spencial
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Keeping Up Appearances
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:35 Hawaii Five-O
9:25 Women Of The World
10:00 News In English
10:25 Counterstrike
11:15 The American Chart Show
12:00 Stay Lucky

Monday, Feb. 19, 1996

2:00 Bonkers
2:30 Richie Rich
3:00 Playabout
3:15 Bustin' Loose
3:40 Animals Of The Mediterranean
4:00 Okavango
5:00 Children's Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children's Programme
Cupido
5:20 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
5:50 Magazine
C'Est Pas Sorcier
6:20 Family Programme
L'Ecole Des Fans
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 McHale Navy
8:00 Invention
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Russia — The Missing Years
10:00 News In English
10:25 A Journey Across The Land Of Islam
10:40 Perfect Scoundrels
11:10 Taurus Rising
12:00 Ellen

Tuesday, Feb. 20, 1996

2:00 Captain Planet
2:30 Jonny Quest
2:50 Iris-The Happy Professor
3:00 Spirit Of Adventure
3:40 Scientific Eye
4:10 Okavango
5:00 Children's Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children's Programme
Cupido
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Varieties
Celine Dion
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Ushuaia
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 You Bet Your Life
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Harry
10:00 News In English
10:25 Three Sovereigns For Sarah
11:15 Feature film

Wednesday, Feb. 21, 1996

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Speed Racer
2:50 Billnye The Science Guy
3:20 Islamic Antiquities In Jordan
4:00 Okavango
5:00 Children's Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Serie
Les Dames De La Cote
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musiqul
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Evening Shade
8:00 Oriental Rugs
8:25 Hawaii Five-O
9:10 Horizon/Too Big, Too Soon
10:00 News In English
10:25 Airwolf
11:20 The Silk Road
12:30 Second Thoughts

When in a hole, stop digging

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

SOMETIMES, because of who we are and because of the things that influence us, we compare places and events with the aim of showing how things could be done in a better and more constructive manner. The whole point of such an exercise would be to show certain groups of people that they can be as good as any other group on the other side of the planet.

Having said this, I have been warned on many occasions about the dangers involved when making comparisons between one's own culture and another with which one is very familiar.

It has been argued that such comparisons can be quite damaging to one's moral and state of mind because, by default, they induce a state of frustration, sorrow, and pity about the current state that we are in.

In spite of all this, and partly because of it, one can't help but fall into such a state even as we glance through many a headline proclaiming a 'white revolution,' even at bodies charged with servicing and maintaining the well-being of our city.

To make something out of all this, try this simple exercise: Imagine a virtual world — making it as perfect as you can. Imagine a virtual road. And once you've done that, imagine a virtual sidewalk. In this near-perfect world, the surface of the road is both bump and ditch-free and the sidewalk actually exists. In this near-perfect world, it doesn't take a genius to figure out how to lay a road in such a manner whereby rainwater, or any other kind of water for that matter, collects on either side rather than in the middle. And it doesn't cost that much either to lay continuous stretches of pavements that people can slowly, but eventually, learn to use.

Anyway, back to our near-perfect little road. Step two of this exercise involves ignoring the polluting sounds and smells of a drilling machine scarring the blemish-free surface of both our road and pavement. We will also try to ignore the poor excuse for a workman, clumsily dressed and smiling, while telling you sarcastically that he will be with you for the next few days laying some phone cables for an institution which pumps more money than any other into a cash-strapped treasury. An institution that could, at least, provide for some decent work and safety standards, for both its workers and the general public, but cannot be bothered.

To many of us, this is not an exercise. This is real life. And these are some of the things that we have to put up with on a daily basis. And if a 'white revolution' that will carry us into the twenty first century does not address such basic rights of public safety and freedom from harassment and pollution, then we should demand that it does. Our younger generation, with its Mercedes-Benz and cellular phones bought with daddy's money, should be made to care.

We should also demand that our journalists and analysts, who have thus far wasted valuable newspaper column space telling us nothing much in so many words about this future, be more thoughtful in future. Professionals have to be made to see that they need to do more to serve their country rather than have each one living in his or her little crucible at the edge of life as a wealth-seeking lawyer, doctor, engineer, or whatever.

It will do us all a lot of good to remember these words by Octavio Paz:

Imprisoned by four walls
(to the North, the crystal of non-knowledge
a landscape to be invented
to the South, reflective memory
to the East, the mirror
to the West, stone and the song of silence)
I wrote messages, but received no reply.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

MOHAMMAD A. SHUQAIR

AMAZING FACTS

• The longest human beard ever recorded was eleven feet, six inches, grown by Hans N. Lanoseth in 1912.

• The Jewish New Year never falls on Friday, Sunday or Wednesday.

• Theodore Roosevelt was the only president of the U.S. who was not sworn in on a Bible.

• The oldest legislative body in the world was founded in Iceland in A.D. 930.

• There are more than 20,000 ways of earning a living.

• During the administration of President Woodrow Wilson sheep were pastured on the White House lawn.

• The USA paid two pence per acre for Alaska.

* * * * *

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

PROVERBS

** This is a book with model answers.
Hatha kitab be'ijabat namoothajiya.

** These are windows made of wood.
Hathehi shababeek mas'nоo'a minal khashab.

** That is a picture painted by a famous artist.
Tilka sooraton rasamaha fannanon azeem.

** These are maps showing the location of Amman and other famous towns in the Kingdom.
Hathehi kara'et towaddeh mawqi' Amman wa modon okhra fil-mamlaka.

** I'm a teacher working in a secondary school.
Ana mu'allem amal fee madrasa thanawiya.

** He is a mechanic clever at repairing Mercedes cars.
Innahu mikaneeki maheron fee tasleeh sayyaratil Mercedes.

** We hope that peace and prosperity will prevail in the Middle East
Na'moll an yasoodas - salam war-rakhaa fesh-sharkil awsat.

* * * * *

JOKES

* A Woman was telling her married daughter that the cold weather was bad for her rheumatism. Her little grand-daughter was present and overheard the conversation. She didn't say anything then, but that night when she went to bed she knew what she was going to do. After she had said her usual prayers she concluded saying: And please God, make it hot for Grandma!"

* * * * *

* A small boy came home after his first day at a new school and said to his mother, "The teacher asked me if I had any brothers or sisters who might be coming to school."

"That's nice of her to take such an interest in us. Did you say that you are the only child?" the mother asked.

"Yes," the boy answered. "And all she said was: "Thank goodness."

* * * * *

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Following are (8) words in old English.
Can you write their modern equivalents: Dohtor, móna, féawe, lungen, cnàwan, daeg, héafod, soefen?.

2. The names of EIGHT of the United States of America begin with the letter M are.....

3. What are the implications of the names T'ang. Sung, and Ming?

4. What was the Dreyfus case?

5. Two famous Englishmen have borne the name of Blake. Who were they?

* * * * *

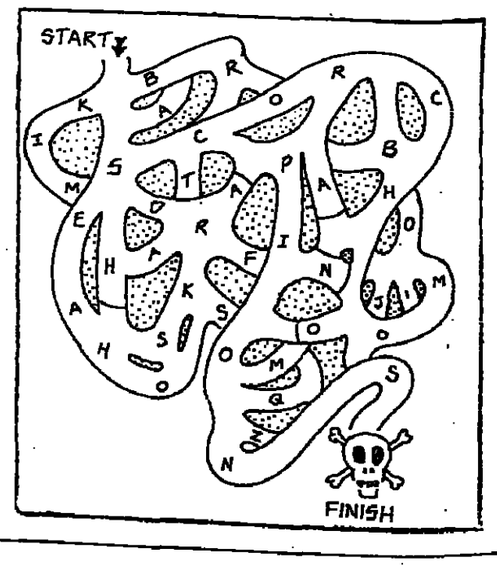
PUZZLES

A deadly Game

THESE fierce-looking creatures have killed more Americans than any other animal on earth!

What are they?

The right path through the maze will take you to the exit. The letters you cross in the way spell out the names of the dangerous creatures.



Over-exposure is no problem for John Travolta

By Steve James
Reuter

HOLLYWOOD — If the movie-going public is sick of John Travolta, it has not shown it yet.

If there is such a thing as Hollywood over-exposure, Travolta might be dangerously close to the contempt such familiarity can breed. But no, it seems America cannot get enough of its current blue-eyed boy, although it was not so long ago that he had to beg for work.

After 15 years in the Hollywood wilderness, Travolta bounced back into the spotlight in 1994's Pulp Fiction, which earned him an Oscar nomination and dozens of international acting awards. Last year, he had critically acclaimed roles in Get Shorty and White Man's Burden. His latest movie Broken Arrow opened on Feb. 9 and there are three more films planned for this year.

"Well, you know I've analysed over-exposure and I think there's a certain logic that if that were true, then people in TV series wouldn't be on for twelve years," the actor told Reuters with a twinkle of those famous blue eyes.

"How more over-exposed can you get than 50 million people a week watching you for an hour, a half-hour? A movie, you're only on for an hour and a half every six months at best. You can't put out more than that. So I don't know if that over-exposure bit isn't a convenience, of sorts, to justify not working or something," he said.

Travolta's movie career appeared to have burned out after his sensational 1977 Oscar-winning debut in Saturday Night Fever followed by Grease in 1978. Urban Cowboy and Moment By Moment both flopped and he was dismissed as a flash-in-the-pan — until a brilliant portrayal of a drug-addicted hitman in Pulp Fiction rekindled America's love affair with the likeable New Jersey native with the cleft chin, who turns 42 on Feb. 18.

"It's hard to imagine that anything could have done what that did for anyone's career," he said of the 1994 hit. "I don't even think Saturday Night Fever did for me — and that was amazing — what Pulp Fiction did for me."

So how does he explain his role as Hollywood's reigning "comeback king", commanding a staggering $20 million per film?

"Appearing and re-appearing has its own magic. I kind of look at it like: 'If you view it that I've disappeared, then good, I've re-appeared, and isn't that magical.' I don't know exactly what I've done to deserve such goodwill ... from the press, the public and the industry. It's something I can't even put my finger on because I'm kind of wondering what I did other than try my best to get good parts," he said.

"If this appearing and re-appearing performs some sort of illusion or satisfaction, I'm all for it," he added with a laugh.

In Broken Arrow viewers will see a different side of the actor, who for the first time plays a villain in a John Woo-directed action thriller about stolen nuclear missiles. "He does pretty alarming things in this movie, this character," Travolta said.

Asked if there was an evil side to him that he drew on for the part of a treacherous air force pilot, he said: "Probably more of a dark side that I've observed in others. Not to say I'm incapable of having dark sides but I feel that I tried to give a heightened sense of a psychotic."

Like all stars who no longer need to watch their pocket books, Travolta says money is not important to him. "That has nothing to do with it. Money is not the object, nor are awards. You have to do a good job and then money becomes a by-product as an award does. You never focus on the goodies."

Is there a danger fans will resent him for making more for one movie than most people earn in several lifetimes?

"I'm in good company because there's about ten other guys that could get paid the same amount and it all depends on how you handle it," Travolta said. "Some (projects) are suited to pay you, some are not, and as long as you keep it in perspective and aren't doing it for the wrong reasons, then you suffer less of a possibility for a backlash."



Actors John Travolta (left) and Christian Slater arrive for the Premiere of their new adventure film Broken Arrow in Hollywood on Feb. 5 (Reuter photo)

Romanian theatre waiting in the wings for revolution

By Diana Voicu
Reuter

BUCHAREST — The world was transfixed by Romania's bloody revolution six years ago, which ended one of Eastern Europe's toughest Communist regimes.

But the drama bypassed the country's theatre, leaving it shackled by a Communist-era mentality of government control which stifles creativity, actors and directors say.

"The press may have got freedom of expression guaranteed by its financial independence, but the theatre cannot," says leading Romanian stage director Mihai Maniutiu.

Maniutiu belongs to a group of actors, directors and designers who say they have been fired for political reasons because the left-wing government did not like their work or simply wanted its friends to have sought-after jobs.

With help from sympathetic British and American theatre people, including some big names, they are trying to build a new independent theatre foundation known as "Art-Inter Odeon" — hard work in a country rich in culture but low on cash.

The Romanian state still pays for most cultural events and controls salaries and jobs of the artistic community — fertile territory for political interference by a ruling party.

Cultural activities are overseen by a network of state "inspectorates" in each area which have the power to hire and fire and approve performances for local and overseas tours.

"We coordinate cultural programmes. We do not impose anything on cultural institutions," Mircea Micu, head of the Ministry of Culture's Bucharest Inspectorate told Reuters.

Mr. Micu said he would like more control, not less, particularly over budgets for cultural institutions which are paid out by local mayors though overseen by the inspectorates.

"Inspectorates are specialised institutions with the role of cultural guidance...Town halls do not have our specialised people. It seems normal to me that theatres should depend on the Ministry of Culture," said Mr. Micu.

For many in the theatre the culture of control is stifling.

"We felt we had to do something to gain our independence and set a model," dramatic actor Marcel Iures told Reuters.

He and others formed the Art-Inter Odeon Foundation which was the first attempt since the Communist takeover in 1947 to set up an independent theatre company in Romania.

Joyce Nettles, a British casting director and member of the foundation, has led the effort to help Romanian colleagues break free of government control. She has persuaded, bullied and cajoled some of the biggest names in theatre to help.

"A lot of theatre people are already helping us and some very famous persons like Alan Bates, Tom Cruise and others are lending their name to the project," she said.

"The foundation is trying to break the centralised system of culture in Romania, which suffocated and destroyed the theatre and film industry for over 40 years and is still doing so at the moment," Nettles said on a visit to Bucharest.

She launched fund raising in Britain after meeting Romanian artists — Iures and director Alexandru Dabija — during a performance in London of Richard III directed by Dabija.

Dabija had just been fired as the director of a Bucharest theatre. He says he was forced out under the pretext of "bad management" because he was bringing independence to a theatre which was attracting private sponsorship.

Mr. Micu, who presided over the sacking, denies the director was removed for political reasons.

"I was forced to fire Dabija because he threatened to resign," Mr. Micu said.

Iures resigned in sympathy.

"When I heard about it I felt it was very important for them to survive in their own country and culture," said Nettles, in Bucharest for the opening performance of the foundation's first production, T.S. Eliot's Murder In The Cathedral.

Critic Victor Scoradet, director of Romania's independent theatre association UNITER, said the sacking was about control of cultural life.

"Budget cuts and illegal dismissals are but forms of political interventionism into culture," he said. "The ministry holds all the means of censorship — it can hire and fire people, it can allocate budgets or fail to do so."

"The monthly wage of a professional actor is 150,000 lei ($58). This is not enough for us to survive," actor Ion Caramitru, head of UNITER, said in a recent protest against low wages by more than 400 actors and theatre technical staff.

Critics and opposition politicians say many of the post-Communist theatre directors and other culture dons who took up prominent positions after the revolution, have been replaced by members of the "old guard".

Art-Inter Odeon hopes to break the cycle of dependence on the state by encouraging more sponsorship and building its own theatre, free from external pressure.

Cinema centenary to be marked with screening of rare, French films

By Matthew Lee
Agence France Presse

PHNOM PENH — Less than four years after the first public cinema screening in Paris in 1895, a movie cameraman working for the Lumiere brothers — the inventors of moving pictures — showed up in Cambodia to shoot footage of the exotic country for his employers.

Now, nearly a century later, those eight little-known, short, silent films, along with 12 others, shot in Cambodia in 1921 and 1927, including a 10-minute documentary thought to have been lost for the last 68 years, were shown here recently to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of movies.

"These are fantastic films and we are very lucky to get them," said Joel Dechez-Lepretre, an official with the French Cultural Centre (CCF) which will screen the films with the cooperation of the Brothers Lumiere Association, the Albert Kahn Museum and the French National Centre of Cinematography.

"These films have never been shown together and the documentary In The Land Of The Leper King was only shown once before in public before it became lost," said Pascal Cardeil-hac, the CCF's audio-visual coordinator.

"For the Cambodians, this will be the first time they will be able to see old moving pictures of their country," he said. "That is very exciting and we have had the earliest films specially restored for this."

Equipped with one of the Lumiere brothers' small cinematographs that doubled as a projector, Gabriel Vey-re, arrived in Phnom Penh in late 1899 to shoot movies and bring them back to Paris to thrill audiences with the mysteries of what was then the French Protectorate of Cochinchina.

"The box for the film in the camera was very small, so he could only shoot about 55 seconds of film before running out, and remember, this camera was powered by a hand crank," Mr. Cardeilhac said.

He added that the technology did not yet exist for Veyre to move his camera so the shots in all eight of the short minute-long clips were "static."

Despite what modern cameramen might find horrendous obstacles, Veyre was able to capture some of the most remarkable and exotic footage of the early years of cinema including the dan-cers of Cambodia's King Norodom, the king himself and elephants in what is now downtown Phnom Penh.

Twenty-two years later, Leon Busy, a civil servant in the general government of Indochina, shot and compiled 11 short films ranging from 37 seconds to 16 minutes in Phnom Penh and at the 12th-century temple of Angkor Wat.

These films, also silent, were then given to Albert Kahn, a French banker who in 1909 came up with the idea to put together a photographic and cinematographic inventory of the cultures of the Earth entitled Archives Of The Planet.

"These may be the first moving pictures ever of Angkor Wat," said Mr. Car-deilhac, advancing through a videotape of the films. "It looks pretty much the same as it does now, except there were more trees and more monks then."

The Archives Of The Planet footage will be screened with a soundtrack, recorded specially by 12 Cambodian classical musicians from the School of Fine Arts, he said.

The final film in the series, In The Land Of The Leper King, shot by Jacques Feyder in February and March, 1927, and assumed lost after its initial screening later that year, is considered the real treat.

"Almost no one has ever seen this film," Mr. Cardeilhac said. "We only came across the only surving copy of it by accident and that is fortunate because it is amazing."

With its scenes of rural, Cambodian life and its presentation of the massive Angkor Wat which is revealed little by little, the 10-minute documentary "evokes the prestige of an unknown civilisation or a far-away and forgotten world," according to an unnamed critic quoted in the CCF's programme.

Though the film is also silent, the 12 musicians from the School of Fine Arts will play their own composition while it is running.

Spring Broadway season looks slim in star power

By Michael Kuchwara
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After a fall season that brought some legendary ladies — Julie Andrews, Carol Burnett, Carol Channing and Zoe Caldwell — back to the New York stage, Broadway prepares for a spring that is much slimmer in star power.

Not only slim, but in terms of new plays and new musicals positively anorexic.

Before the deadline for Tony Award nominations in early May, only a handful of new plays and new musicals appear likely to make it to Broadway.

There will be a parade of revivals, of course. Bus Stop, Inherit The Wind, The Night Of The Iguana, A Midsummer Night's Dream and A Delicate Balance, are among the old plays.

The dramas and comedies will be done by non-profit houses such as Lincoln Centre Theatre, the Rounda-bout Theatre Company, Cir-cle In The Square and the National Actors Theatre. Without them, Broadway would be even more of a ghost town than it already is.

The old musicals will be two shows that have been revived on Broadway before — The King And I and A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum.

The first, a Rodgers and Hammerstein classic first seen on Broadway in 1951 with Gertrude Lawrence and Yul Brynner, arrives April 11 at the Neil Simon Theatre. The stars are Donna Murphy, a Tony winner last season for Passion, as the starchy English governess, and Lou Diamond Phillips as the imperious monarch of Siam. Whether Phillips will shave his head, as Brynner did for his memorable bald-pated portrait, remains to be seen.

Forum brings the gifted clown Nathan Lane back to Broadway. He is following in some impressive footsteps — Zero Mostel who played the wily slave Pseudolus in the original production and Phil Silvers who appeared in the 1972 revival. The opening: April 18 at the St. James Theatre.

As for new musicals, look no further than Big. It's an adaptation of the 1988 film about a 12-year-old boy who wishes to become big — and gets his wish. Tom Hanks played the confused youth in the original. Daniel Jenkins, who was Broadway's Huck Finn in Big River, does the stage honours. The music is by David Shire and the lyrics by Richard Maltby Jr., last represented together on Broadway with Baby. Look for Big on April 25 at the Shubert Theatre.

Two other musicals are probable if not yet firmly penciled in. State Fair, a stage version of the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein film, starring John Davidson and Kathryn Crosby, has been travelling the country for more than six months. Its tour ends in mid-February. If a theatre can be found, Broadway will be the final stop.

Also pending is the Savion Glover Dance Extravaganza of the black experience in America, Bring In 'da Noise, Bring In 'da Funk, a big hit off-Broadway at the Public Theatre, the production, directed by George C. Wolfe, is expected to transfer to Broadway in April. Its likely home: The Music Box or the Ambassador.

A new play by composer and lyricist extraordinaire Stephen Sondheim? Well, a new play co-written by Sondheim and his "company" collaborator, George Furth.

The title is Getting Away With Murder, and it concerns a group of patients who arrive for their therapy session and discover their doctor is missing. The cast includes John Rubinstein, Terrence Mann and Christine Ebersole. The opening is set for March 17 at the Broadhurst.

August Wilson, the playwright behind Fences and The Piano Lesson, returns with Seven Guitars, the story of a small-town musician and an ex-convict. Keith David stars. The drama arrives on March 28 at the Walter Kerr Theatre.

The only other new play is a comedy about a mother-daughter relationship called The Apple Doesn't Fall ... by Trish Vradenburg. Florence Stanley is mom and Margaret Whitton her daughter. The curtain rises at the Lyceum Theatre on April 17.

Then there are the play revivals.

The classiest event: Probably the Royal Shakespeare Company's acclaimed production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Adrian Noble. The opening date is March 31 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre.

The biggest stars: George C. Scott and Charles Durning in Inherit The Wind by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. The 1955 play concerns the famous Scopes monkey trial in Tennessee. The National Actors Theatre Production premieres on March 18 at the Royale.

The most anticipated casting: Cherry Jones starring as uptight spinster Hannah Jelkes in The Night Of The Iguana, Tennessee Williams' last big Broadway success. Jones won a Tony last season for her incandescent performance in The Heiress. She gets to prove herself again at the Roundabout Theatre Company starting on March 21.

The toughest assignment: Mary-Louise Parker who has to compete with the movie memory of Marilyn Monroe — available at your local video store — in William Inge's Bus Stop. The role of the sexy saloon singer was one of Monroe's best. Rising young actor Billy Crudup, who was the tutor in Arcadia, plays the innocent cowboy. The play opens on Feb. 18 at Circle In The Square.

The most intriguing second look: A quartet of fine actors — Rosemary Harris, George Grizzard, Elaine Stritch and Elizabeth Wilson — re-evaluate Edward Albee's A Delicate Balance in its first Broadway revival. The Lincoln Center Theatre production of yet another Unhappy Albee Family arrives April 21 at the Plymouth Theatre.

One-time teen idol Luke Perry makes off-beat film

By Bob Tourtellotte
Reuter

PARK CITY, Utah — Luke Perry, a one-time teen idol on the hit television series Beverly Hills 90210, finds himself at a crossroads in his career as his first film since leaving the TV show hits the big screens.

But the movie he's chosen as his vehicle, Normal Life, is an off-beat film made on a tight budget. It's one that director John McNaughton says doesn't fit into any normal film type, like action adventure or comedy.

The "doesn't fit into any genre" characterisation makes it a risky choice for a television idol such as Perry because if it fails at the box office and his star begins to tarnish, it's possible Hollywood will turn away from him.

"I think in a way (all the movies) are pivotal, but I don't think one movie makes or breaks a career," Perry said at a news conference at the recent Sundance Film Festival here.

Perry said at this point in his career he is more interested in working on movies that challenge him creatively and artistically. He would rather work with directors he believes in, actors he respects and scripts he likes.

"I'm trying to base my creative future choices on that," Perry said. "I'm not worried about the right (career) move or the right movie."

In Normal Life Perry plays Chris, a strait-laced rookie cop in small-town Illinois. Chris tries to be the perfect policeman in what eventually turns into an imperfect setting.

On a routine call, he meets Pam, played by Ashley Judd, who at first is a normal, single working woman. From the moment they meet, the two are drawn together because inside both are relatively lonely, lost people.

As the film progresses, though, Chris discovers Pam is deeply psychotic with a tendency toward self-mutilation, and Chris begins to see his normal, staid life unravel.

The movie is an off-beat love story. Perry's character varies widely from the free-spirited, sometimes rebellious Dylan McKay of Beverly Hills.

"One of the big objects of the game was not to see one frame on screen of the guy from 90210, not sound like him, walk like him, anything," Perry said.

Like other television stars before him, however, Perry may find a tough road ahead of him as he attempts to steer clear of McKay.

In his most recent film, 8 Seconds in which he portrayed rodeo champion Lane Frost Perry received solid reviews, but audiences found it difficult to imagine the savvy, Beverly Hills college student as a bull rider. The rodeo film was only a moderate performer at the box office.

Still, Perry maintains he is trying to make a break from the character, and he says life, though slower, is still busy and offers are plentiful after 90210.

"It's definitely less hectic, and it's given me the opportunity not to just attack the script they put in front of me every week," he said. "I can actually exercise some choice."

He says he receives many scripts, and he has a showtime (pay-cable television) movie and one more film lined up. And this is his first time at the Sundance festival, where after a film is screened actors field questions.

"I was really scared I was really nervous," Perry said about his first time at the show. "But it's cool. We want to get out and do good movies, and that's cool."

Belgian makes medical history with moon technology

By David Fox
Reuter

BRUGES, Belgium — A Belgian surgeon has created medical history using robotics and computer technology to lead an operation on a patient in a different country.

Dr. Luc Vanderheyden, a surgeon at St. Lucas Hospital in Bruges, took charge of diagnostic stomach surgery on a patient at Nieuwegein in the Netherlands, over 200 kilometres away.

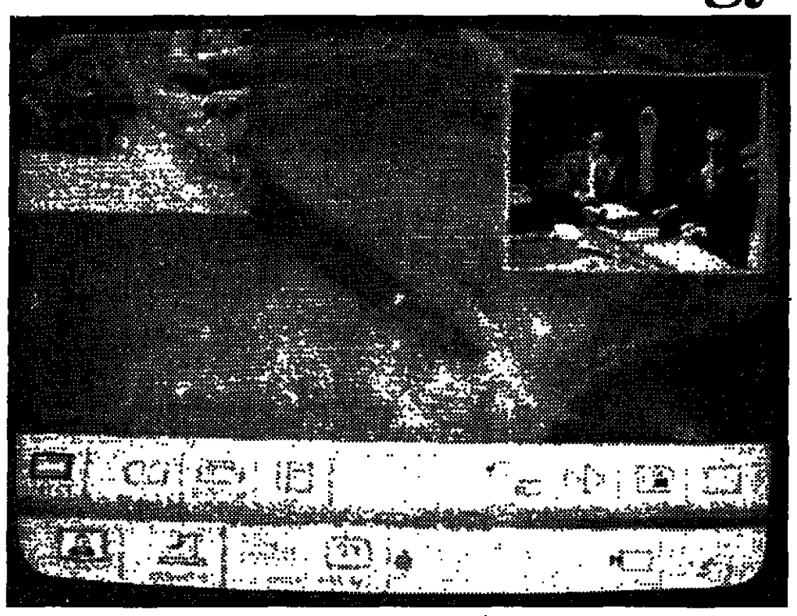
"The operation went very well," said Dr. Vanderheyden, who diagnosed a hernia. The unnamed 55-year-old patient was a volunteer, doctors said.

The procedure, known as tele-robotic laparoscopic surgery, took about half an hour.

Although surgeons have been using computers and robotics for over a decade, the doctors — speaking to a Reuters reporter at the Bruges hospital — said this was the first time the technology had been used on a patient in a different country.

Yulan Wang, who designed the equipment, said it was the same technology that allowed someone on Earth to control a robotic arm attached to a spacecraft on the moon.

During Friday's operation, Dr. Vanderheyden controlled a computer linked by telephone line to one in the Netherlands, which controlled the robot arm holding a surgical camera.



A TV screen displays surgeons in Nieuwegein, the Netherlands (top left), Dr Luc Vanderheyden in Bruges (top right at left) and the patient stomach being operated on. Dr. Vanderheyden, a Belgian surgeon at St. Lucas Hospital in Bruges, uses robotics and computer technology to lead an operation on a patient in Nieuwegein, the Netherlands, over 200 kilometres away. Although surgeons have been using computers and robotics for over a decade, the doctors said this was the first time the technology had been used on a patient in a different country (Reuter photo)

The incision for the probe was made in Nieuwegein by Dr. Peter Go.

Both sites could see each other and the patient's stomach with cameras beaming pictures down an enhanced telephone line.

The procedure is currently expensive — the operation cost about $200,000 — although officials said the technology could eventually save money.

"In the future, the far future, you could have a team of the very best surgeons, all located centrally, and have remote-controlled theatres scattered around the country," said Dr. Vanderheyden.

He said he did not see any ethical problems arising from the technique, although it is still awaiting approval in the U.S. by the Food and Drug Administration.

Mr. Wang said that despite being very proud of his equipment he did not see it eventually replacing surgeons. "After all," he said, "the helicopter was supposed to replace the car and the car is still with us."

Hospitals face confusion on U.S. health policy

By Joanne Kenen
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Already buffeted by drastic changes in the private sector, U.S. hospitals are struggling to plan ahead without knowing what federal health policy is going to look like over the next few years.

"It's a tough time, in between what used to be, and not knowing what the next is," said Washington State Hospital Association official Leo Greenawalt, one of many U.S. hospital trustees and administrators interviewed at the recent American Hospital Association (AHA) meeting here.

Medicare, for older Americans, and Medicaid, for the impoverished, are both likely to undergo dramatic changes, and much slower growth in spending for the rest of this decade and early in the next century.

But precisely what those changes will be, exactly how much money will be available and how it will be divided up among hospitals, doctors, and insurer-owned health plans, are big unknowns because of the budget impasse in Congress.

Smaller health programmes are getting financed for only a few weeks at a time on a scaled-back basis under a series of stopgap spending bills known as Continuing Resolutions.

Besides doubts about straightforward payments for patient care, the budget morass creates great confusion about a host of related health issues financed through the government — including the billions of dollars hospitals get to train young doctors, or the allowances for hospitals that treat disproportionate numbers of the poor and uninsured.

Almost everyone agrees that it makes sense for hospitals to start new alliances and joint ventures or perhaps start up their own "provider sponsored networks" to compete with health plans owned by insurance companies.

But no one knows what the regulatory or anti-trust framework will be, or whether the federal rules will supercede the current patchwork of state regulations.

"We're going ahead and putting the pieces in place," said Marvin Neely, president of the Milwaukee Hospital Council, saying his members are betting that whatever the new regulations are, they will not be more unfavourable for them than existing ones.

For some hospitals, the delay in enacting changes may mean that if they can't quite dodge the bullet, they can at least better brace for it.

"For some the delay may mean a window of opportunity," said AHA spokesman Richard Wade. "Either get more efficient now and reduce spending, or wait and taken a sudden hit."

Compelled by changes in the private sector or reforms by state government, some hospitals and health systems have already pushed ahead into managed care to serve Medicare and Medicaid patients and are designing new ways of delivering care to compete in a more cost-sensitive milieu.

For instance in New Orleans, the 500-bed Alton Ochsner Medical Centre has already plunged into managed care. A teaching hospital, it has a multi-speciality physician group covering 125,000 people in health plans and a Medicare Health Maintenance Organisation serving 25,000 senior citizens.

"We've got a microcosm of health care," CEO Frank Riddick said.

Many hospitals are still groping for solutions, and words like "anxiety," "uncertainty" and "hedging our bets" crop up often among their administrators.

"You get all geared up for Medicare managed care, but where we are, there is no managed care," said Dennis Burke, CEO of the 49-bed Good Shepherd Community Hospital in a small town 180 miles from Portland, Oregon.

The Medicare reforms that stalled in Washington would have raised minimum payments for such rural areas, making them more attractive to managed care investors.

"We're not cutting-edge but we watch the industry and try to learn from success stories," said Gary Bebow of the 150-bed White River Medical Centre in Batesville, Arkansas, where about two-thirds of patient days are covered by either Medicaid or Medicare. "We try to stay educated and play the 'what if' game."

New programme controls TB — report

LONDON (R) — A well-organised programme, with proper supervision and free drugs delivered regularly, can cure up to 90 per cent of tuberculosis (TB) cases in a specific region, researchers reported.

In the new approach, known as directly observed therapy, village doctors were drafted in in rural China personally to supervise treatment. A team of Chinese and U.S. tuberculosis experts, organised by the Harvard Centre for population and development studies, set up a formal structure for treatment.

Only about 50 per cent of cases had been cured in previous programmes in China, mostly because patients did not take a full course of drugs.

In a report in the Lancet medical journal, the researchers said that among the 100,000 patients treated since the programme was set up in 1991 the cure rate rose to nearly 90 per cent in new cases and 80 per cent among those previously treated.

The patients were treated with a cocktail of the antibiotics Streptomycin, Isoniazid, Pyrazinamide and Rifampicin taken every other day for two months, then just Isoniazid and Rifampicin for another four months.

The drugs were given free and every dose was monitored by the village doctor.

"We believe that the China tuberculosis project provides a well-designed and implementable model for national tuberculosis programmes in other parts of Asia and perhaps elsewhere," the researchers said. Tuberculosis, which is highly contagious, affects millions of people worldwide and kills up to two million a year.

The World Health Organisation says it is making a big comeback and predicts it will increase by 100 per cent in Africa and 50 per cent in South East Asia over the next 10 years. One big problem is that patients do not always take a full course of drugs and spread drug-resistant forms of TB.

Vaccine shows promise against rheumatoid arthritis

By Randall Mikkelsen
Reuter

PHILADELPHIA — A vaccine replicating the effects of pregnancy on a woman's immune system has shown promise in treating rheumatoid arthritis, Thomas Jefferson University researchers reported.

The report, in the current issue of the Journal of Rheumatology, said that of 11 women aged 27-55 with the disease who were given the experimental vaccine, eight showed signs of significant improvement and none had serious side effects.

"Immunisation (with the vaccine) may represent a suitable and safe alternative to drug treatment for selected patients," the journal article said.

The 11 patients studied were given three treatments each over periods ranging from 10-20 weeks.

About four million Americans suffer from the disease, in which the body's immune system attacks joints, causing pain, swelling and even deformity. It is thought to be caused by a virus.

Inflammatics Inc. IOLL, a company established by one of the vaccine's developers, was aiming to begin larger-scale clinical trials of it this spring. The vaccine could be widely available within two to three years, Thomas Jefferson University said in a release.

The next round of tests will include men as well as women, who are more prone to the disease.

The vaccine was based on research that showed pregnancy can trigger a remission of the disease in women with rheumatoid arthritis. This was thought to be at least partly due to the production in a pregnant woman's immune system of a type of protein called cytokines, which protects the foetus from immune system rejection by the mother.

"The immune response against foetal proteins that occurs in a mother during pregnancy is primarily an anti-inflammatory one so that the foetus doesn't get rejected," the study's author, Thomas Jefferson University medical professor Dr. Bruce Smith said in a news release.

"We sought to duplicate this anti-inflammatory effect in non-pregnant (rheumatoid arthritis) patients through vaccination with foreign cells," he said.

The vaccine is based on an injection of white blood cells from a donor into the patient. Most commonly, the cell donor was the person's spouse and the treatment worked better in those cases. Possibly because of previous exposure by the patient to the spouse's immune system through sexual intercourse, the study said.

The researchers said the improvement noted after the vaccine treatment was not as dramatic as the effect of pregnancy on the disease. They also said repeated doses of the vaccine would probably be needed to maintain the effectiveness of the treatment.

Japan's endless pursuit of cleanliness

By Miwa Suzuki
Agence France Presse

TOKYO — The smallest room in the house is supposed to be the most private, but in crowded Japan where walls can be paper thin, it often ends up being the most public.

Ways of disguising the necessary ablutions that start everyone's day have turned into a growth industry here, from push-button gadgets simulating the sound of flushing water to tablets that erase all trace of odour.

In some cases, they not only ease personal concern but help the environment.

To cope with possible water shortages caused through repeated flushing by users trying to hide their actions, the northern city of Sapporo last year installed sound-making devices in toilets at 96 junior and senior high schools.

One city official said the move had met with "favourable reactions" from both students and teachers.

Toto Ltd., a bathroom fittings specialist, has push-button and automatic sensor units that make sounds similar to that of a toilet flushing.

"Oto Hime" (Sound Princess), launched in 1988, has been installed in the women's rooms of office buildings, department stores, schools and expressway parking areas, mostly to save water in a nation where women tend to flush twice on each trip to conceal the sounds they unavoidably make.

Sales of Oto Hime, priced between 15,900 yen and 27,500 yen ($150 and $260), have risen from 1,000 units a month to 4,000.

Smell is also deemed a troublesome side-effect.

Health-food maker Dairin Co. Ltd. found it was on a winner with its "Etiquette Bju" tablets, launched in September 1994, which renders odourless the gas and solids expelled by the body.

The tablets were aimed at the bedridden, but sales proved 10 times higher than expected, particularly among young women.

In its first year, Dairin sold 750,000 units of Etiquette Bju, priced at 3,000 yen for a one-month supply.

"Some 40 per cent of our customers are now women in their 20s and 30s," a Dairin spokeswoman said, adding that about 6,000 people regularly buy its tablets, which are made from green tea extract and other natural ingredients.

Central Commerce Co. Ltd. markets "Champion," made from white-mushroom extracts — sales of the 5,900 yen, 30-pack monthly treatment launched in May 1994 are running at 2,000 a month.

Sales Manager Yusuke Tanaka said the powder eliminates odour within four days and has attracted marketing offers from Taiwan and other Asian countires.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

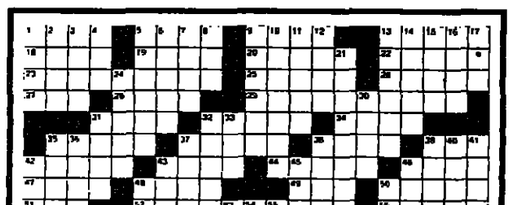
TOM SWIFTIES
By Frances Burton

ACROSS

1 Ancient garment
5 A Flintstone
9 Playbill listing
13 Homeless boy
18 Milky gem
19 Singer Falana
20 Perfume source
22 In reserve
23 "I've inherited a fortune," he said —
25 Steady gaze
26 Ingratiating
27 Born
28 Marvin and Majors
29 "The maid quit," he said —
31 — on (useless)
32 Virgo
34 Tennis's Nastase
35 Scamper
37 Tied
39 Moist
39 Handle roughly
42 Rig up
43 Cut
44 Social climbers
46 Hurting
47 Gives odds
48 Mexican dish
49 Popeye's Olive —
50 Steps over a fence
51 High mountain
52 "My pants are wrinkled," he said —
56 — down (muted)
57 Electron accelerators
60 Theater apparatus
61 Fountain treats
62 Climbing vines
63 Trumpet sound
64 Roll with a hole
65 Burn with liquid
66 Fob off
67 "This stuff is dry," he said —
70 Annoyance
71 "I love pancakes," he said —
73 Vast expanse
74 Medicine
75 — Vegas
76 Certain paintings
77 Quickly, briefly
78 Troubles
79 More exposed
81 — St. Vincent Millay
82 Makes deceptively attractive
83 Cunning
84 The bird
85 Heron
87 Danza and Bennett
88 Lifeless and dull
89 Mimics
90 Shoppers mall
91 "I lost my shopping notes," he said —
94 Pitcher's no-no
95 Smile
98 Sew loosely
99 War of the —
100 "The stock market is roaring up," he said —
102 Leader
103 Beijing material
104 Chop in
105 Verdi opera
106 Subsidizes
107 — and terminer
108 Heavenly light
109 Arabian sultanate

DOWN

1 Burg
2 Early Ron Howard role
3 Strong wind
4 The whole enchilada
5 Smooth-talking
6 Bidding tournament
7 Building wings
8 Actress Dern
9 — on (poll front)
10 Comics with
11 Track stealthily
12 Piece of cannon
13 Dirt
14 Fragrant herb
15 Grain grinder
16 Dastardly
17 A marshal of France
21 "He can be trusted," she said —
24 Gully washer
30 Shade trees
31 Corn spike
32 Nonmetallic element
33 Bitter herb
35 Slaty rock
36 "Let's visit the tombs," he said —
37 BLT word
38 Sherlock's creator
39 "My pencil is dull," he said —
40 Fr. city
41 Unwanted plant
42 Thick shoe
43 Aegean island
45 Actor Nick
46 Filched
48 All in
50 Put on
53 NY village
54 Embrace
55 Blood vessel
58 Profits
59 Lists
61 "The Balls of St —"
63 ID ally
64 Pelican Abbrs
65 Hogwash
66 Stun up
67 Pinch pennies
68 Is in charge
69 Barks sharply
70 Sacred bull of Egypt
71 "Moll —" (Defoe)
72 Protuberances
77 "— Melbourne!"
79 Scathe
80 Grandiosely supposed
81 Go wrong
82 Novelist Mamm
84 Magic mystic
86 Old Faithful, e.g.
87 Mom lowering
88 Fall flower
89 Put to the rest
90 Mediterranean island
91 Put on cargo
92 Emerald —
93 Alone
94 Baseball hit
95 Crazy nights
96 Alan in Paris
97 Actor O'Neal
98 Puppeteer Baird
100 — relief
101 -- Paulo



Last Week's Cryptograms

1. Amazing couple solved very hard labyrinth puzzle. They sent in the correct solution, but it got lost in the mail.
2. After spending too many months in lonely outer space, astronaut signed up for the Flat Earth Society.
3. Cool clarinet player performs at concert for great young music fans.
4. Few hot dog vendors have difficulty trying to eke out a living on city sidewalks.

CRYPTOGRAMS

1. DOMMAG NRG: ZWNZ ZODG CB AOBG HWGT LCX BOTNAAL ITCB LCXQ RNL NQCXTM, NTM TC ACTRGQ WNTIGQ ZC RC.

— By Barbara J. Rugg

2. OICN KELHNRNL VZTP PICNFOARK HALF MONET: E 'SILFI YIZRH VEK IS TIFFARK PIAD SIL DNPP FOER SASFT MNRFP.

— By E.C. Doyle

3. BSDBFT BORKTR IG B TREHTI RELKRTTHGP. VBLIBHP GA B SRRXHPY BPU THPXHPY TNHL YKBORNP GKURKT NHT YKRD IG "LRKTGP BSS SHAR KBAIT."

— By Duane H. McGogy

4. XIWS IR NW, PLPY INV HILPVYXPYS. HELP WAIVS WAVERS SI SAVERS.

— By Ed Huddleson

Diagramless, 21x21
By James Barrick

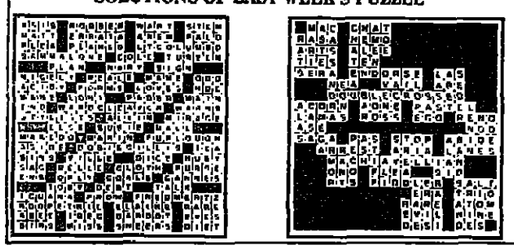
ACROSS

1 Place where lents are planted
5 Newborn cow
9 Otherwise called
11 Racetrack
12 Be perfect, in a way
17 Newt
18 — cotta
19 Soft mass.
20 Trap
21 Minco the actor
22 Helper, abbr
26 Hunts
29 Fill with gladness
30 Tailless creature
31 Dressed in a flowing garment
32 Utter
33 Clodhopper
— Winter mo
35 Satisfy a big appetite
42 Racket
43 Lots and lots of money
44 Small piece
45 Flat
46 Dirt from chimneys
47 Brings to bay
48 Grayish
49 Tall, — and handsome
50 Solemn fear
51 Dipper's cousin
54 Spanish article
57 Seraph
58 "Love — many splendored thing"
61 Fast-acting
64 Liberate
65 Lombardi or Knaus
66 Make sound recordings
67 — qua non

DOWN

1 Restaurant
2 First Arabic letter
3 Catcher's glove
4 Buddy
5 Army rank, abbr
6 Acknowledge
7 security
8 Fluid rod
9 Run away
10 Preches
12 Range of vision
14 Rubbed out
15 Tapestry
16 Scottish Highlander
22 Island greeting
23 Shoe made of wood
24 Hardint
25 Danson of "Cheers"
26 Bewildered
27 Bus
28 Kind of fever
29 Gaelic
34 Lav
36 Numskull
37 Fund in a poker game
38 Musical drama
39 Amazon, e.g.
40 Glossy
41 Snakelike fishes
44 Feather scarf
45 Brit bus, abbr
46 Kind of hammer
48 Fritz
50 Jai —
52 Restore
53 She: Fr.
54 Upper room
55 Atmosphere
56 Pace
58 Fire, grp!
59 Lori pan
60 To — (precisely)
62 Confederate general of note
63 Taxing letters

SOLUTIONS OF LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE



ANSWERS

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Daughter, moon, few, lung, know, dog, head, seven.

2. Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana and Missouri.

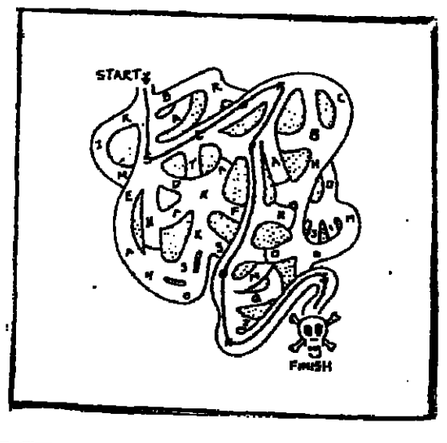
3. They are the names of three of the historic dynasties of China: the T'ang dynasty (618-907); the Sung dynasty (920-1280) and the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

4. Captain Dreyfus, an officer on the General Staff of the French army, was wrongfully accused of treachery towards France. On Dec. 22, 1894, he was convicted by Court-Martial and condemned to penal servitude on Devil's Island, where he served many years of his sentence before the case was finlly re-opened and Dreyfus's name cleared on July 12th, 1906. The case, which involved anti-Semitism (Dreyfus being a Jew) and other political issues, excited enormous interest in France, and indeed throughout the world.

5. Robert Blake, naval commander (1598-1657); William Blake, poet and mystic (1757-1827).

* * * * *

PUZZLES
A DEADLY GAME



Dutch rose sets standard for world's romantics

By David Evans
Reuter

AALSMEER, Netherlands — Ever been stung for a rose on Valentine's Day? Well, don't shoot the flower-seller for the exorbitant price — it has probably been set in the small Dutch town of Aalsmeer just a matter of hours before.

Aalsmeer hosts the world's biggest flower market, sprawling over a 63-hectare site near Amsterdam's busy Schiphol Airport.

But despite its size, the accent is on speed — a red rose auctioned here may be changing hands on a Moscow street-corner or in a New York boutique within hours.

"When you're dealing with fresh flowers, speed is everything and we can have flowers sold in the morning and in Tokyo by the evening," said Yvonne van Zijl, spokeswoman for the auction.

"People expect their flowers to be fresh."

Ahead of February 14, around 25 million blooms pass through the four auction rooms each day, with roses making up the lion's share. Aalsmeer's flower market auctions 2.4 billion guilders ($1.45 billion) worth of flowers a year.

"St. Valentine's is the same day each year all over the world, that's what creates the extra demand," said Ms. van Zijl.

Trailers laden with red roses criss-cross the huge expanse of the market floor, pulled by some 300 motorised trolleys as the auction's 1,800 employees scramble to get flowers to their destinations as quickly as possible.

The Dutch have captured around 65 per cent of the world flower export market, with 7.8 billion blooms a year grown in greenhouses across the country. Three quarters of total production is sent for export via the auctions.

Buyers come to Aalsmeer from all over the world making this week the busiest time of the year, ahead of Mother's Day.

Most of the products on offer are grown locally but it also attracts flowers from as far afield as Israel, Colombia, Kenya and Zimbabwe.

"It's the great variety here — that's the major attraction for most growers," Ms. van Zijl said.

The rose is, of course, the star attraction and prices have never been as high. The St. Valentine's Day habit is spreading from the traditional markets in Britain and the United States to new ones in Eastern Europe. Russia is particularly important.

This extra demand has helped spur prices to record highs this year. It's not unusual for prices to double, the average climbing from around 0.80 guilders (50 U.S. Cents) apiece to two guilders ($1.20) in the week before Valentine's.Day

One long-stemmed variety — the Grand Gala — soared to a record nine guilders ($5.45) per flower at auction this week.

"We have never seen prices that high, it was exceptional," Ms. van Zijl said.

These are merely auction prices but they do determine the final selling price, which can be at least double by the time flowers reach the stall.

Bidding is done, appropriately enough, by "Dutch auction" with the price for a particular lot shown on a giant electronic clock. As the price falls, buyers step in when they feel the level is right using skills more akin to a city dealer to get the best price possible.

"You have to know when to press the button — too early and you risk paying too high a price, too late and you could lose the lot to a competitor," Ms. van Zijl said.

The market's location gives swift access to nearby Schiphol, from where the blooms wing their way around the globe.

Aalsmeer is looking to speed up this process and one of the projects under consideration involves building a tunnel directly linking the market to the airport terminal buildings.

Ms. van Zijl said this could cut the average 20-minute transit time to the airport by half.

And it seems the flower business is recession-proof. Ms. van Zijl said economic stagnation in much of Western Europe during the early 1990s did not stop sales from rising.

"In fact we found sales grew through the recession. Maybe people could not afford new cars or expensive holidays but they would always want flowers to brighten their day."

Joseph Brodsky — uncowed by a century of persecution

Joseph Alexandrovich Brodsky, Russian poet who became America's poet laureate, died on Jan. 28, aged 55



Joseph Brodsky, the heir to Russian modernism and the bittter tradition of persecuted writers

WHEN JOSEPH Brodsky was 24 he appeared before a Soviet court accused of being a parasite.

"What is your occupation?" said the judge.

"I am a poet."

"Who gave you authority to call yourself poet?"

"No one. Who gave me the authority to enter the human race?"

"Have you studied to become a poet?"

"I didn't think poetry was a matter of learning."

"What is it then?"

"I think it is a gift..."

This was in 1964. Stalin had been dead for 11 years, but despite the reforms of Nikita Khruschev, the Soviet state still regarded as illegal any "gifts" it did not approve of. Mr. Brodsky was sent to a psychiatric clinic for investigation and then sentenced to five years in a labour camp. He was released after two years, perhaps as a result of pressure from Western writers. Mr. Brodsky said he had go off lightly. "Only two years. By Soviet standards it's positively homeopathic." In the 1930s Osip Mandelstam, regarded by Mr. Brodsky as the greatest Russian poet of this century, wrote a poem critical of Stalin. He was persecuted over a period of years and died in custody.

The Soviet Union did not adopt Horace's benign view that poets should be indulged by the state. Any poet who was not licensed by the Writers' Union was potentially subversive, and, worryingly, might even remain hidden from authority. A poet needed only a pencil and paper to practise his dangerous craft. And even this evidence may elude the security police: Mandelstam's widow, Nadezhda, committed many of his poems to memory.

Adultery and movie-going

Some critics say Mr. Brodsky's work was the equal of Osip Mandelstam's. In 1987 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, but the Nobel selectors have sometimes used their favours to give encouragement to dissidents. Mr. Brodsky treated the award lightly. "A big step for me," he smiled, "a small step for mankind." Nadezhda Mandelstam merely conceded that Mr. Brodsky was a "remarkable" man. But whatever posterity's verdict on Mr. Brodsky's talent, he will be seen as an important part of a Russian tradition of writers who remained uncowed through a century of oppression.

As the son of a naval officer, he was, he recalled, "a true child of my father." But by the time he was a teenager he decided that his country had become a "drab hell" in which the only forms of free enterprise were "adultery and movie-going" and art. He abandoned school and scratched a living doing casual work. He wrote poems and read them to his friends, for whom, he said, "civilisation meant more than daily bread and a nightly hug." This sounds dangerously like romanticism, except that it seems to be true. Poets in Russia can fill a theatre with their lyrics. Mastery of language is applauded. Mr. Brodsky's suggestion that Russian newspapers should be made to publish Proust so that everybody could enjoy him was not entirely whimsical.

Mr. Brodsky, though, was being pursued by admirers in the West. Invitations were arriving to attend the gatherings of the international literary set. Culture was a weapon in the cold war. As a Jew Mr. Brodsky was urged to move to Israel. In 1972 he left Russia for ever. The story usually told of his departure is that he was given an exit visa, put on an aircraft to Austria and told not to come back. At this time the Soviet Union had stopped killing or jailing those it regarded as a nuisance and was instead persuading them to leave the country. So the story has plausibility. Mr. Brodsky, though, was demonstrably happy to accept Western ways, unlike, say, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, also an exile, who was severely critical of the West (but not of the people of Vermont, where he made his American home) and has since returned to Russia.

In Europe Mr. Brodsky was taken under the wing of W. H. Auden, who gave him useful introductions. He moved to America and received an abundance of grants and academic work. American poetry, he said, made him an American "long before I arrived." American medicine probably helped the chain-smoker and hard-drinker to survive several heart attacks before the one that killed him this week. Mr. Brodsky became an American citizen in 1980, and in 1991 he was made American poet laureate, an honour in the gift of the Library of Congress.

By then, though, he was writing less poetry. There were thousands of words of literary criticism and memoirs. His collection of essays, "Less Than One," is a model of elegant prose. But the ironic poetry that so upset his Soviet masters was no more. Talking to The Economist in 1990 Joseph Brodsky discussed, albeit reluctantly, "how things would have gone if I had stayed in Russia." America could be a "source of distractions." Would he have written more poetry had he not gone into exile? "Perhaps."

The Economist

South Africa's city of gold loses lustre

By Melanie Cheary
Reuter

Johannesburg — Once the rich heart of South Africa's city of gold, Johannesburg's central business district is dying, falling prey to crime and grime.

"To let" signs hang on dirty buildings which used to house many of the country's engines of commerce before they left for the suburbs.

Even the landmark 30-storey Carlton Hotel, catering for the business elite, has been forced to close floors because of lack of guests.

The final blow could be closure of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange's (JSE) century-old trading floor as brokers move to a screen-based trading system later this year.

"Departure of the JSE...Will send a message to the rest of the international business world that will certainly be interpreted in only one way," said Keith Beavon, professor of human geography at the University of the Witwatersrand.

"Almost certainly it will be perceived that South Africa, of which Johannesburg and its region are the very heart, is dying."

Neil Carter, director of operations at the JSE, acknowledged that introduction of automated trading from March 8 would mean much dealing could take place outside the city centre.

But he denied the exchange was abandoning downtown Johannesburg, pointing out that it would keep its headquarters in the centre and brokers would have to be based there for share settlement. "The JSE will stay here," he said.

Nevertheless, the trend is to leave the city and despite some of cheapest rents in the world, more than 15 per cent of its prime office space lies vacant.

With muggings, car hijackings and shootings every day, property analyst Erwin Rode believes the old commercial centre will never return to its glory days.

"The central business district is not going to pull right in the short or the long term. Especially not now that the deathly twins crime and grime have gotten hold of it," he said.

The greater Johannesburg Transitional Metropolitan Council (TMC), trying to breathe life back into Johannesburg which sprang up 110 years ago when gold was discovered, is looking to new projects to revitalise the area.

A 162.5 million rand ($44.5 million) revamp is planned for the railway station and private sector projects with a value of some 3.5 billion rand are in the pipeline.

The reserve bank (central bank) is constructing a building in the centre as part of the "Newtown" venture expected to take 10 years to complete.

But the city skyline shows these ventures pale into insignificance against frantic construction in suburbs like rosebank and Sandton north of the city centre.

A TMC spokesman admitted it was an uphill struggle to revitalise the centre, with crime deterring even those commuters still travelling into it each day from entering into city life.

"You have these superblock developments with their own policing and management structures where employees drive straight into the basement and never actually breathe the city air," he said.

Some temporary reprieve may come from the Gauteng provincial government's recent move into Johannesburg. Most of the 105,000 square metres taken up in the year to the end of November was due to the provincial administrators renting premises.

But Mr. Rode said: "It's like an aspirin, bringing little more than short-term relief to the decentralisation trend."

In a desperate bid to find tenants, city landlords are offering bargain-basement rates.

Johannesburg rents average just $10.20 per square foot, while London charges $59.70 and Paris $61.70, according to commercial property agent JHI.

But many businesses prefer to pay twice as much in Johannesburg's northern suburbs where rentals near-

Vatican goes on-line

By Philip Pullella
Reuter

VATICAN CITY — Holy megabytes the Vatican has gone on-line and the information superhighway — serving up the gospel according to the Internet — now leads to the frescoed halls of the papal palace.

Want to know what Pope John Paul says about world peace? Want to know why the Roman Catholic Church bans contraception or women priests? What's up in Catholic-Jewish relations?

You will soon be able to find all that and more by accessing http://www.Vatican.Va.

The site, which went on-line on Christmas day, is still in its fledgling state and offers only limited services so far.

But millions of people have "visited" it in little more than a month and an e-mail box received some 4,000 messages while it was open on a temporary, experimental basis.

"A lot of people asked for prayers from the Pope because of personal situations and he answered some of them," said Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

Hit the site now and you will see a picture of the Pope and two options: communications from the holy father and news from the Holy See.

The first offers recent papal speeches in six languages and the second calls up the Vatican information service, about current events.

Eventually all important papal pronouncements and church documents, even encyclicals from previous papacies, will be there. Vatican officials hope it will be an asset for scholars.

"All of a sudden the Pope is not some figure in Rome miles away and centuries behind but is right there with us because he is using the same media," said sister Judith Zoebelein, the 47-year-old American nun who is coordinating the project.

"The number of hits we had on the site has been well into the millions...These were people who were interested enough to say "oh wow, the Vatican is on the Internet'," she said.

More than 300,000 connections from 70 countries were made on December 25 and 26 alone after a bout of influenza forced the 75-year-old Pope to miss Christmas day mass and cut short his message to world.

One e-mail message came from a computer user named Sarah who advised the Pope to drink lots of liquids and chicken soup.

Mr. Zoebelein, one of the Vatican's top computer specialists, reels off terms like web servers, hits, home pages, downloading and modems with the ease with which most nuns recite the rosary.

This is a nun who knows her stuff inside out but don't even think of jokingly calling her sister mary cyberspace, as some people have.

"I try to discourage that," she told a reporter firmly.

But she is definitely high on taking the Vatican to the world's PCs.

"The potential for what the holy father calls the new Evangelisation is enormous," she said.

"A lot of very educated people who want to use the best technology and aren't necessarily in touch with the church in terms of getting the latest from the Vatican will use this."

The project has full papal backing, although the Pope is said to never use a typewriter, let alone a personal computer. He still writes his speeches longhand and in Polish.

"He is very supportive. He is absolutely for it. He sees the potential. He doesn't have to be at a keyboard himself to know there is a mix of people, technology and need that the church can really grab a hold of and offer something," Mr. Zoebelein said.

Nearly 90 per cent of the e-mail messages that came in before the box was closed were positive.

A secondary school religion teacher from California reported that he was able to revive his students's interest in catechism by downloading the Pope.

"I saw you on the net," the teacher wrote. "I had the kids log on to the site and we pulled out something and it just created a whole different atmosphere because to them this is something they could relate to."

A priest in Tampa, Florida was thrilled because for the first time, he was able to see the Pope's Christmas message in time to incorporate it into his own sermon on the same day.

"There's a sense of people saying to the Pope "here we are in our living room, we logged on and there was your Christmas message'," Mr. Zoebelein said.

Other messages were less glowing, openly disagreeing with the Pope's position on abortion and contraception.

As the system develops, Catholics who need quick help, such as those agonising over a decision about an abortion or divorce, will be advised to go to their local bishops for advice.

"There's no way we could do it from here and it wouldn't be just. We hope something similar will be established at a diocesan level where people in crisis...Can ask for help," Mr. Zoebelein said.

Navarro-valls, the Vatican spokesman, said the service was not there to replace the local priest.

And no, just in case you were wondering, as one e-mail correspondent was, you definitely cannot go to confession on the Internet.

The information superhighway still stops at the thick velvet curtain of the confessional box.

Car bomb explodes in Bahrain

(Continued from page 1)

had been stolen from its Indian owner. Bahraini newspapers have reported a recent rise in car thefts.

On Tuesday, the government vowed to bring to justice those suspected of planting a home-made bomb on Sunday at the Diplomat Hotel.

"The criminals will not escape punishment," Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa Bin Sulman al Khalifa said.

The government pledged to crush anti-government riots and put an end to acts of sabotage after more than a year of protests.

The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain accused the government of deliberately "blowing up" the car to discredit the opposition. Government sources denied that.

Mansour Al Jamri, spokesman for the Bahrain Freedom Movement in London, said his group was asking Bahrainis "not to celebrate," the Eid Al Fitr in protest against government policies.

Followers were asked to "wear the symbols of sad days" such as black mourning clothes. Mr. Al Jamri told the AP in a telephone interview.

"It's a form of protest or a strike," he said. "A form of peaceful resistance."

Mr. Al Jamri, son of jailed opposition leader Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, reiterated his movement's call for a dialogue with the government.

Labour to reconsider Palestinian state

(Continued from page 1)

made before agreements between Israel and the PLO established Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Interior Minister Haim Ramon told the Associated Press that the platform "did not stand the test of reality."

He added, however, that Israel would prefer a Jordanian-Palestinian federation to an independent Palestinian state.

Labour officials insisted Wednesday that removing the clause denying the Palestinians the right to a state did not mean the party would agree to its establishment.

Also Wednesday, the secretary-general of the Labour Party called for the party to back the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the Jordan Valley region of the occupied West Bank.

Nissim Zvili, speaking in an interview with the Haaretz newspaper, said the Labour congress would consider altering a clause in the party's platform calling for the Jordan Valley settlements to be maintained.

"These settlements are not indispensable for Israel's security," Mr. Zvili said.

But he added that the Israeli army should maintain a presence in the Jordan Valley, which he called "a security zone for our eastern front where no foreign army should be deployed."

Mr. Zvili, a leading dove in the Labour movement, argued that the PLO could more easily accept a continued Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley when it begins negotiations with Israel this May on the final status of the Palestinian territories if the civilian settlements were removed.

Some 3,500 Israelis now live in about 20 agricultural settlements strung out along the Jordan Valley, a tiny percentage of the 140,000 settlers residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In other comments Wednesday to Israeli radio, Mr. Zvili set out four "red lines" that he said must not be crossed in the final status talks with the Palestinians:

— The Jordan Valley must remain Israel's de facto eastern security border.

— Israel must refuse a return to its pre-1967 borders.

— Jerusalem will remain the unified capital of Israel.

— Palestinian refugees must not be permitted to return to homes inside Israeli territory.

Mr. Zvili also confirmed that the Labour Party would consider removing the clause in its platform that rejects the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

"We have to look toward the future and open the door to this possibility," Mr. Zvili said, while acknowledging that a majority of Labour members would not necessarily agree.

"Prime Minister Shimon Peres prefers a confederation between Jordan and the Palestinian territories," he said.

Rocket misses senior Israeli officer

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon (AP) — Guerrillas ambushed the motorcade of Israel's deputy chief of staff in South Lebanon Wednesday, but security sources said no one was hurt in the rocket attack. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the guerrillas fired a Sagger missile at Maj. Gen. Matan Vilani's armoured convoy near the Beit Yahoun crossing in the Israeli-occupied enclave in South Lebanon at 1 p.m. (1100 GMT). The armour-piercing missile exploded a few yards from Gen. Vilnai's motorcade, causing no damage. Gen. Vilnai, who was on an inspection tour of Israel's self-styled "security zone," later had lunch with Akel Hashem, a senior commander of the South Lebanon Army.

Jordan-Saudi trade rises

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The volume of trade between Jordan and Saudi Arabia has increased in the past year by JD 13.4 million ($18.8 million) over the 1994 figure while the trade balance between the two countries was in favour of Saudi Arabia, figures released by the General Department of Statistics have showed.

In 1995, the Kingdom exported to Saudi Arabia goods worth JD 58.4 million ($82.2 million) compared with JD 64.6 million ($91 million) in 1994, a decrease by 10.3 per cent. On the other hand Jordan imported goods worth JD 82.9 million ($116.8 million) in 1995 compared with JD 63.4 million ($89.2 million) in 1994.

The trade of balance between the two countries in 1995 was in favour of Saudi Arabia by JD 24.5 million ($34.6 million) while it was in favour of Jordan by JD 1.2 million ($1.7 million) in 1994.

Saudi Arabia, Jordan's third largest trade partner after Iraq and India, imported about 21,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetables which accounted for 6.6 per cent of the Kingdom's total production of these items in 1995.

Before the 1991 crisis, Saudi Arabia was Jordan's major buyer of the Kingdom's fruit and vegetables. In 1990, Riyadh imported 50 per cent of Jordan's total exports which reached 570,000 tonnes. Following the crisis, Riyadh halted its import of Jordanian vegetables, but Saudi Arabian imports of fruit did not stop.

Saudi Arabia, which was before the 1990 crisis the major source of oil for Jordan, with about 50,000 to 40,000 barrels a day, expressed its readiness to supply Jordan with its needs of oil.

Following the crisis, Amman strucked an accord with Iraq to supply Jordan with at least 70,000 barrels of oil. In December 1995, a Jordanian team headed by Ahmad Basheer, under-secretary of Ministry of Energy signed a protocol to renew the accord with Baghdad.

Last January, Saudi minister for trade, Osama Al Fakeeh, visited Amman and expressed Riyadh's willingness to resume pumping oil from the eastern oil fields in Saudi Arabia to Al Zarqa refinery if Jordan was ready to pay for it.

One third of the oil supplied by Iraq to Jordan was free of charge, another third was given at $1 less than world market price and the remaining quantity was given as settlement of Iraq's debt for Jordan.

The volume of trade between Jordan and Saudi Arabia in 1995 was JD 141.4 million ($199.2 million) compared with JD 128.0 million ($180.3 million) in 1994.

UAE in new drive to expand energy sector

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has completed major oil and gas projects and has launched a new scheme to ensure it will remain among the world's leading oil powers, officials have said.

Although it already has the fourth largest crude reserves in the world, the Gulf country said it would press ahead with exploration for more hydrocarbon within its new five-year development plan, starting in 1996.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), which controls the emirate's energy industry, said under the new exploration and development programme it would drill more oil wells and conduct seismic and geological surveys.

"ADNOC has chalked out a programme to develop some oil and gas fields discovered recently in its concession areas. Work is now underway to implement those programmes," ADNOC director general, Yusuf Ibn Omair, said.

"Negotiations are also being conducted to carry out projects to set up petrochemical industries," he wrote in the Abu Dhabi chamber of commerce and industry bulletin.

Mr. Omair, also secretary general of the Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC), gave no details of those ventures but local industry sources said they involved water and gas injection to boost the production capacity of onshore and offshore fields and raise the level of hydrocarbon reserves.

The UAE has around 98 billion barrels in recoverable crude reserves, nearly 10 per cent of the total global reserves. But officials said their country was sitting atop more than double that quantity, half of which could not be extracted by present productino techniques.

The UAE has been engaged in plans to raise oil and gas output capacity since 1990, with an average investment of $1 billion a year.

From around 2.3 million barrels per day (b/d), oil output capacity was projected to reach 2.6 million b/d in 1995 and three million b/d in 2000.

Mr. Omair said onshore projects completed recently included the development of the giant Bab oilfield as well as Dabiyya, Rumaitha and Shanabel fields.

Work is also underway to inject gas into the giant Umm Shaif offshore oilfield and the first phase of the project will be finished soon, he said.

In gas, ADNOC has completed a project to boost output at Umm Shaif to provide additional supplies to the nearby liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant on Das island after its production capacity was doubled to five million tonnes per year to face an increase in consumption by Japanese clients.

"Onshore, we are going ahead with a project to boost the gas output capacity at Habshan plnat. It will be commissioned within a year," Mr. Omair said.

ADNOC sources said the Habshan project, part of the ambitious Onshore Gas Development (OGD) scheme endorsed by the government four years ago, would triple its capacity to 55.9 million cubic metres (1.865 million cubic feet) per day while condensate recovery will surge to 130,000 b/d.

Mr. Omair did not say when ADNOC would carry out the petrochemical project, which was approved by SPC last year. The complex, worth around $1.5 billion, would be UAE's first and would tap its massive gas reserves, estimated at 5.7 trillion cubic metres (190 trillion cubic feet).

"ADNOC is working to implement the strategy drawn up by SPC aimed at achieving production and industrial targets in this sector," Mr. Omari said.

The UAE currently produces around 2.16 million b/d of oil under a quota assignment by the 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries. It .. the only Gulf state that has maintained foreign partners in its energy sector on a 60-40 basis.

Unrest in Bahrain hits retail trade and tourism

MANAMA (AFP) — Political unrest in Bahrain has hurt the Gulf state's fledgling tourism industry and its retail trade but sparked no exodus of funds or foreign firms.

Reports of rioting in January have scared off a number of Arab and European tourists at a time when the tourism industry was hoping to reap the benefits of a campaing to attract more travellers, especially from Europe.

"We've had a lot of cancellations. I think these problems have been a setback for tourism as far as Bahrain is concerned," a travel agency executive said.

Bahrain, seeing tourism as a way to depend less on limited oil reserves, has in the last two years tried to attract more tourists from beyond the Arab Gulf states.

In another blow for such hopes, a home-made bomb in a major hotel of the Bahraini capital Sunday wounded three guests, officials said.

And there are also fewer Gulf Arabs visiting Bahrain so far this year. "They're among the first not to travel to Bahrain," said the executive who asked not to be named.

One agency said it had reserved only two hotel rooms for the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan while it had booked around 15 rooms in each of the six five-star hotels by the same time last year.

The retail trade has also been hurt by the unrest which first broke out in December 1994 when the Sunni-led authorities arrested a Shiite Muslim cleric who demanded the restoration of parliament.

Stores selling jewellery, clothing and electronic goods said they have seen sales slump by around 50 per cent so far this year — following a recovery during a calm period in the second half of 1995.

Bahrainis prefer to save their money because they are uncertain about the future, a retailer said. There are also fewer customers from neighbouring Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar who are afraid to come.

However, the troubles have not caused foreign banks and companies to leave Bahrain, the Gulf's offshore financial centre or caused Bahrainis to transfer more of their funds overseas, bankers and diplomats said.

"I haven't seen any escalation in the outflow of funds," a foreign banker said.

A Japanese banker said the unrest had no "direct influence" on his company's decisions to invest in the region and it was too early to know whether it could undermine Bahrain's efforts to lure industries here.

"I see no cases where concrete studies (on setting up industries) have stopped due to the troubles," he said.

Bahraini authorities intend to stamp out the unrest and create the right climate for investment to create more jobs and ease some of the tensions which have fuelled the unrest.

Although travel agencies said a recent decision from the government to allow news coverage had discouraged tourists, foreign bankers now feel reassured because they no longer have to rely on rumour.

Bankers and diplomats added they had no evidence to suggest protestors were targetting Western and Japanese nationals, although some Indian, Pakistani and other Asian workers have been attacked.

Shiite activists told AFP they had no objections to the presence of Westerners although they said some protesters have attacked Asian labourers suspected of being informants for the government.

The opposition appears to know it is in their economic self-interest to avoid attacks on foreigners, the Japanese banker said. "The opposition leaders know it could have a boomerang effect."

Still, there are nagging fears about the future.

Libya to use foreign savings to balance budget

TUNIS (R) — Libya said Tuesday it plans government spending totalling 4.518 million dinars in 1996 without running up a deficit, formally acknowledging for the first time that it would draw on foreign assets to cover its revenue shortfall.

The oil-rich North African country, hit by falling oil prices and economic sanctions, has drawn on foreign savings for several years, diplomats said.

But Finance Minister Mohammad Beit Al Mal's forecast that there would be no budget deficit was the first time that Libya has said in advance that it would use its foreign assets.

The minister told the General People's Congress in a radio report monitored in Tunis that Libya used foreign savings to cover annual budget deficits of about $600 million in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

"This suggests that Libya will draw upon its foreign assets for 1996, but the difference is that this is already budgetised," a Tripoli-based diplomat said.

A government statement said the budget had been approved but gave only spending figures and did not forecast revenues.

This year's spending figure corresponds to $12.7 billion which is far higher than Libya's oil earnings which were estimated at about $6 billion in 1995. Oil revenues usually account for about half total budget revenues.

The official rate for the U.S. dollar is 0.355 dinar, but a dollar fetches up to 3.5 dinars on the black market because of inflation running at an estimated 100 per cent a year since 1992.

Low oil prices on the international market and the sanctions imposed on Libya since 1992 by the United Nations Security Council over the Lockerbie affair, including the freezing of some of its foreign assets in Western countries, have compounded Libya's economic woes.

Sanctions have hit almost every segment of the economy and the government has been forced ot cut spending and investment.

During this year's stormy congress debates on the budget the government came under strong pressure to pay civil service salaries, which aree up to seven years in arrears, and to be more transparent about the use of assets abroad.

Central Bank sources said Libya's foreign assets in 1994 were estimated at 1.818 billion dinars ($5.121 billion). Bankers said they were mostly deposited in Gulf and Asian banks.

Prime Minister Abdul Majid Al Gu'ud told the congress that an additional 2.489 billion dinars ($7 billion) "portfolio" from the sale in 1986 of Libya's stake in Italian company Fiat had been lent to Libyan state-owned firms.

JORDAN TIMES
TEL: 699634/684311

THE BETTER HALF® By Glasbergen



"We all concentrated on a common goal at work, but we still couldn't make our boss spontaneously combust."

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ENMOY

NYSOW

GEPPIN

PHISBO

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A ○○○ FOR ○○○○○○○

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: IGLOO HAVEN TROUGH TONGUE
Answer: A three-martini lunch can be this — "HIGH" NOON

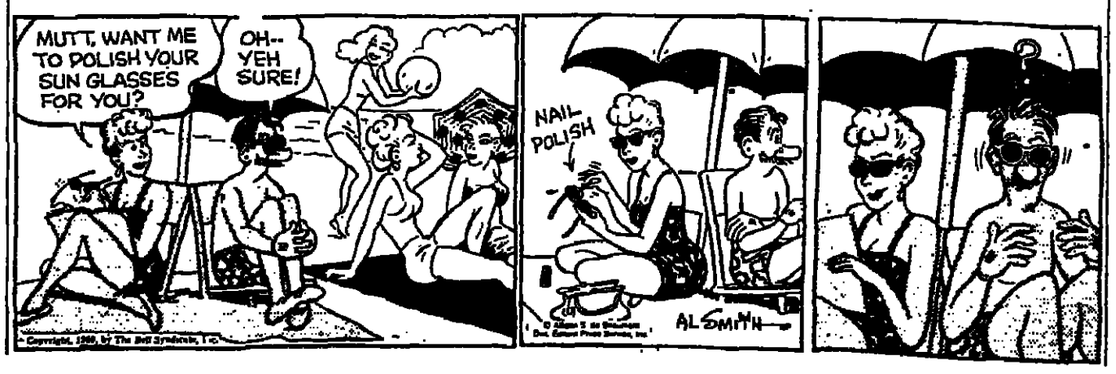
Peanuts



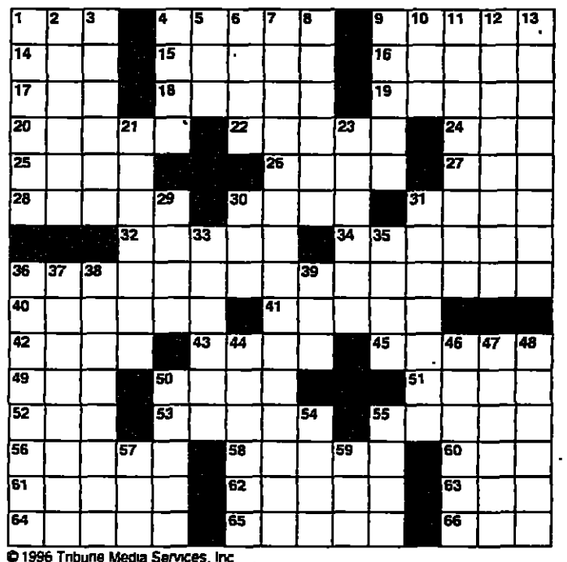
Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE Daily Crossword by Chuck Deodene



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ACROSS
1 Wilt
4 Cuisine pros
9 Orang's kin
14 Thurman of "Jennifer Eight"
15 "— Be" (Beatles)
16 Detection method
17 Mousse
18 "Get — on!"
19 Love, to Luigi
20 Pacify
22 Socially inept ones
24 — Yutang
25 Run amok
26 Red and Yellow
27 See 28A
28 With 27A, western wind
30 Like — of bricks
31 RBI, e.g.
32 Ghana's capital
34 Tourist's snapper
36 Sedentary strategist
40 Salt dispenser
41 Main artery
42 Need for 4A
43 Commotion
45 Delete
49 Mount on Crete
50 Underground stem
51 Moran or Gray
52 Flushed
53 Vague rumor
55 Snake
56 Simultaneously
58 Muse of mime
60 A Gabor
61 All in
62 Boca —, FL
63 Opposite of pos.
64 Bridge seats
65 List of candidates
66 Poet's monogram

DOWN
1 Sweetens
2 First name in flying
3 128 ounces
4 Adobe
5 Cloth border
6 School on the Thames
7 Halsey or Nimitz, e.g.
8 Sound system
9 Vulgar
10 Certain actor
11 Golden calf worshiper, for one
12 Tomato sauce
13 Before birth
21 Besieges
23 Ballerina
29 Yeam
30 "Exodus" name
31 Applied sloppily
33 200 cigarettes
35 Hand fee
36 Pronounce, in a way
37 Zambia and Zimbabwe, once
38 Bullfighters
39 Muck
44 Commands
46 Gung-ho
47 Sifting devices
48 Infuriate
50 Certain students
54 So long
55 Excellent
57 After expenses
59 Toddler

Yesterday's puzzle solved

H	O	E	D	■	E	A	G	R	E	■	S	A	G	E
E	L	S	E	■	L	U	A	U	S	■	T	R	E	K
R	E	A	P	■	O	G	L	E	S	■	R	E	N	E
B	O	U	T	I	Q	U	E	■	A	M	U	S	E	D
■	■	■	H	O	U	R	■	B	Y	R	D	■	■	■
P	U	R	S	U	E	■	C	A	S	S	E	T	T	E
O	N	E	■	■	N	E	A	R	■	■	L	I	R	A
W	I	S	H	■	T	A	R	O	T	■	S	L	O	T
E	T	T	A	■	■	R	A	N	I	■	■	E	V	E
R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	■	G	A	R	D	E	N
■	■	■	R	O	S	S	■	P	E	R	U	■	■	■
A	M	U	L	E	T	■	M	E	R	I	N	G	U	E
J	O	S	E	■	A	B	I	D	E	■	N	A	V	Y
A	L	E	S	■	T	O	D	A	Y	■	E	P	E	E
R	E	D	S	■	E	X	I	L	E	■	R	E	A	D

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You know how to persevere and be efficient in handling practical matters before lunch today, but later tonight are confused.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Don't change your procedure during the daytime today since you are actually doing fine. Avoid overspending in the evening.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Handle those personal affairs which are important in the morning today, then be more economical. Pay pressing obligations which come you way.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be with allies who are congenial in the morning today, and later this evening be careful you do not make any errors in judgement.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use tact in whatever you have in mind in the morning today for best results in attaining it. Don't pressure others or there could be adversity.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Don't be tempted to leave the old for the new and untried at this time or you could get into a peck of trouble with those in authority.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be sure you carry through with what you have promised your mate today. Later this evening, avoid one who wants to make radical changes.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be willing to compromise today with a fellow associate who is stubborn, then later this evening you have many tasks to take care of.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Show that you are steady at your career activities and don't do anything today which could alienate a fellow associate.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Think about pleasures you have enjoyed today and make arrangements for more of the same in the days ahead, especially with loved ones.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have to be very tactful at home in the morning today so as not to aggravate the situation which exists there. Avoid a demanding person.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get at your desk tasks early this morning and be wise in handling correspondence, telephone talks, etc. Rest at home this evening with loved ones.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Long discussions with those who can help you to gain your finest goals today can bring fine definite results, which can be very beneficial.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) This is a fine day today for studying into the possibilities for adding to your present abundance. Steer clear of a greedy partner.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Early today plan how best to gain your personal aims and desires and then take the right steps. Avoid one who is not conventional.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Study every angle of some new course of action today which helps you to get ahead faster, but relax in the evening with close friends and loved ones.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Study carefully the ideas presented to you today by a logical thinker and use them in order to improve your position in life for the better.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You are able to handle career activities much better in the business world in the morning. Tonight, use patience at home with your mate.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Garner all the data you can at this time before you commit yourself to some new project, but don't let any doubt creep in.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Study brochures, etc. so that you know how to handle your practical affairs today much better. Be thoughtful to your mate, so there are no disagreements.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you listen to ideas of partners today, there can be greater mutual advancement heading your way. Study trends and know better how to proceed.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You can use methods seldom employed and get better results with your career activities today. Obstacles will clear up to your advantage.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a good day today to plan amusements with congenial friends for the days ahead. There is opportunity from inveations.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Plan to get into activities today with your loved ones which they would enjoy the most. Steer clear of gossips in the evening.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311/
699634

Schroders beefs up financial operations in Lebanon

BEIRUT (R) — J. Henry Schroder Co. SAL, Lebanon's most experienced investment house, is beefing up its operations in the country as investment banking opportunities multiply in Lebanon and the Middle East.

The company, formed in 1974 as a joint venture between Schroders PLC of London and the brothers Anthony and George Asseily, pioneered project and corporate financing in Lebanon in the 1970s.

It has already resumed corporate and project financing activities in Beirut in the wake of the 1975-90 civil war and is now expanding its operations and preparing to develop the Lebanese money market and capital markets, managing director Anthony Asseily told Reuters in an interview.

He recently brought back to Beirut four Lebanese executives with specialised investment banking skills gained abroad to work on corporate and project finance.

The four joined Scottish assistant general manager Roy Gardner, whome Mr. Asseily tempted to Beirut in April 1995. They will soon be joined by a fifth Lebanese returnee who will help develop the money market and capital markets.

"We see there is work to be undertaken in Lebanon and the Middle East, and this is why we took the decision to beef up our operations here for project and corporate finance, and to project to the Middle East in due course," Mr. Asseily said.

Schroders was formally registered last week as an investment banking house with the Bank of Lebanon and raised its capital to the two billion Lebanese liras ($1.25 million) minimum.

Mr. Asseily said the company long had close but unofficial relations with the central bank. "We have registered because to develop the money and capital markets we have to have official relations with the central bank," he said.

Beirut bankers welcomed Schroders' decision to strengthen its operation in Lebanon.

"They are very important... I suspect they will bring a substantial input into the market," a banker told Reuters."

In March 1995 Schroders managed a $50 million eight-year internationally syndicated loan for Cimenteries Nationales SAL, Lebanon's second biggest cement producer, in which the International Finance Corporation, the privatee sector arm of the World Bank, took a $20 million share.

"We are currently advising a German consortium on a BOT (build, operate, transfer) contract for a 20-kilometre toll motorway north of Beirut worth a few hundred million dollars," Mr. Asseily added.

Schroders is also advising on the restructuring and recapitalising of Banque du Credit Populaire, once one of Lebanon's best banks, which market sources believe may be involved in a merger of acquisition by a foreign or local bank.

Mr. Asseily sees good prospects for corporate and project financing in Lebanon, the Gulf and the Middle East. "So much will be have to be spent on infrastructure and reconstruction with very little resources," he said.

He says Lebanon's greatest asset in finance is the specialised skill of its bankers and financiers. Many are now abroad, but they could give Beirut an edge as a financial services centre if they are brought home in the future.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

HOUSING BANK CENTER - AMMAN - SHMEISANI
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 14/02/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	162	37385	333.750	331.000
BANK OF JORDAN	50	178	3.550	3.550
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	4200	11086	2.630	2.640
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	2407	3956	2.540	2.540
THE HOUSING BANK	2350	12431	4.970	4.970
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	1230	3393	2.750	2.760
JORDAN GULF BANK	35850	36352	1.010	1.020
ARAB JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	7000	12400	1.820	1.800
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	2332	8902	3.820	3.800
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1869	6352	3.400	3.400
BEIT ZIRAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	700	2128	3.010	3.040
ARMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	18850	15224	.820	.800
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	6546	8442	1.280	1.350
BANKS SECTOR	78912	155962	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE	186.02 : +0.09%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	6162	10718	1.740	1.760
VEHICLES OWNERS FEDERATION	8430	56481	6.700	6.700
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1550	1473	.960	.950
JORDAN PRESS FOUNDATION / AL RAI	400	4120	10.400	10.300
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & CUMBERLAND HOTELS	1250	2450	2.100	2.120
ARAB INTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	1350	4660	3.460	3.490
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	4260	6908	1.150	1.140
SERVICES SECTOR	23390	85006	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE	125.51 : -0.02%
ATTAHQEEP CONST. MATERIAL MANUFACTURING	783	970	1.200	1.250
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	14829	54122	3.650	3.650
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES	500	1580	3.150	3.160
THE ARAB POTASH	3650	21138	5.730	5.800
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINERY	110	1092	9.930	9.930
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	616	4665	7.550	7.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	3050	13534	4.420	4.440
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	1250	8950	7.150	7.160
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	500	2810	5.620	5.620
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	3500	1868	.540	.530
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	900	1275	1.420	1.420
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	750	1218	1.620	1.630
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	1450	1411	.980	.980
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	2500	3450	1.400	1.380
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	1700	1640	.980	.960
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	1700	2720	1.590	1.600
EASTERN INVESTMENT	1250	1761	1.680	1.500
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	1300	3897	3.000	2.990
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	5650	10387	1.860	1.830
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY	7298	9394	1.300	1.280
EL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	2500	5788	2.290	2.330
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	2750	3740	1.360	1.360
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	58501	157601	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE	124.30 : +0.61%
GRAND TOTAL	160409	398568	INDEX NUMBER: CHANGE	158.20 : +0.26%
NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET	: 252364			
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET	: 117757			

Jordanian and Iraqi industrialists sign cooperation pact

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi and Jordanian businessmen have signed an accord to boost cooperation and increase trade between their countries, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported Wednesday.

The accord, which comes amid political tension between the two neighbours, was announced at the end of four days of talks between a visiting delegation of Jordanian industrialists and their Iraqi counterparts.

The two sides said in a statement they had reached an "accord on unifying the positions of Jordanian and Iraqi industrialists within Arab and international organisations."

It also stressed "the need to strengthen industrial investment in Jordan to meet the needs of the Iraqi market."

Khaldoun Abu Hassan, the head of Amman's Chamber of Industry who led the Jordanian delegation to Baghdad, said it had agreed to "develop economic activities between the two countries and eradicate the obstacles in the way."

The 25-strong delegation returned to Jordan Wednesday.

Jordan decided last month to slash by half the credit guarantees for exports to Iraq because of Baghdad's mounting debts. But the Kingdom still relies on Iraq for all of its oil supplies, which it imports under an exemption to U.N. oil and trade sanctions imposed on Baghdad after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq is in negotiations with the United Nations on resuming limited oil exports under international control in return for food and medicine.

German DEG may buy shares in Industrial Development Bank

By Suleiman Al Khalidi
Reuter

AMMAN — DEG, the overseas investment arm of the German government, is considering buying 1.2 million unsubscribed shares in Jordan's Industrial Development Bank, bank officials said Tuesday.

DEG — Deutsche Entwicklungs Gesellschaft — could decide by March on buying the shares valued at JD 3 million, part of 4.5 million shares issued last year to raise the capital to JD 12 million from JD 6 million, General Manager Rajab Al Saad said.

The Jordanian government's share in the bank, which provides low-cost medium and long-term loans to industrialists, was diluted to 11.5 from 18 per cent by the issue.

The bank heads a list of profitable shareholdings in listed companies that the government is expected to sell to the private sector under a proposed privatisation plan.

Over 50 per cent of its capital is held by Jordan's major banks and the rest by institutional and private investors.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3762/72	Canadian dollar
	1.4698/08	Deutschemarks
	1.6458/68	Dutch guilders
	1.1996/06	Swiss francs
	30.23/27	Belgian francs
	5.0642/93	French francs
	1581.793.2	Italian lire
	106.72/82	Japanese yen
	6.9620/20	Swedish crowns
	6.4240/90	Norwegian crowns
	5.6843/43	Danish crowns
	1.4132/42	Singapore dollars
	0.7562/67	Australian dollars
	7.7325/55	Hong Kong dollars
One sterling	$1.5386/96	
Gold (ounce)	$402.80/403.30	

JORDAN TIMES
TEL: 699634
684311

BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Ministry of Industry and Trade starts new policy to encourage national industries

☆☆ OFFICIALS AT the Ministry of Industry and Trade have started a new policy to provide backing for the national industries by conducting field visits to these institutions from time to time. According to Mohammad Smadi, the ministry's secretary-general, the aim of the visits is to follow up on the progress of the factories' production process and to emphasise the ministry's keenness to continue providing all forms of possible technical support to these industries. Dr. Smadi visited the factories of the Jordan Worsted Mills Company and El-Zay Ready Wear Manufacturing Company last week and plans to visit other plants and companies in the future (Al Dustour).

Jordan, Egypt to study new proposal to boost maritime transport between Aqaba and Egyptian ports

☆☆ JORDAN AND Egypt have agreed to conduct technical and financial studies towards setting up a $10 million maritime transport company by April 1996. The idea of establishing the company is the result of discussions between Jordan's Port Corporation Director-General Dureid Mahasneh and Egyptian maritime officials. The company would operate a special shipping line to transport containers between Egyptian ports and the port of Aqaba and, at a later stage, with other ports on the Red Sea. Dr. Mahasneh said the special shipping line was a Jordanian proposal that entailed Egyptian and Jordanian private sectors' providing most of the investment in the project which would receive the support from ports in both countries as well as the Suez Canal Authority. Dr Mahasneh indicated that the aim of setting up the company was to encourage maritime transport to and from Aqaba via the Suez Canal. This step would be the second following an agreement between the two countries last year that gave containers of goods passing through the canal a 20 per cent reduction in fees (Al Dustour).

Foreign investment funds invest JD 500,000 in Jordanian shares

☆☆ INFORMED SOURCES at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) estimated the trading volume of foreign investment funds in Jordanian shares at more than JD 500,000 during the last quarter of 1995. According to a list of non-Jordanian ownership of shares published by the AFM, shares of the Jordan Cement Factories Company were in highest demand by the foreign investment funds as they bought 35,200 shares during the mentioned period. Non-Jordanian ownership in the capital of the Bank of Jordan fell to less than 2.5 per cent. The list showed that changes occurred in foreign ownership at some institutions and that the percentages at the end of last January were: 20.34 per cent at the Jordan National Bank, 12.83 per cent at Cairo Amman Bank, 7.33 per cent at the Union Bank for Saving and Investment, 49.05 at the Jordan Islamic Bank, 7.42 per cent at the Jordan Cement Factories Company, 6.34 per cent at the Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company and 9.27 per cent at the Dar Al Dawa Development and Investment Company. Foreign ownership in some companies is nearing the 50 per cent limit such as the Housing Bank (47.7 per cent), the Delta Insurance Company (44.4 per cent) and the Arab Potash Company (41.6 per cent) (Al Aswaq).

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Royal Jordanian is pleased to inform its passengers that Al-Abdali Sales Office opening hours are from 8:00 a.m. till 7:00 p.m. as of the 14th of February 1996 till the end of the holy month of Ramadan, except for Friday 16th of February, it will be from 8:30 a.m. till 1:00 p.m.

Season's Greetings

Safadi becomes director of sales at Amman Marriott Hotel

RAMI SAFADI has very recently been promoted to the post of director of sales at the Amman Marriott Hotel. Mr. Safadi graduated from the (University of Orlando) Orlando.Florida with a Hospitality Management Bachelor Degree in 1993. He occupied different positions with other international hotel chains in the United States from 1990-1993. Mr. Safadi joined the Amman Marriott Hotel in 1993 as sales manager after graduation and then was promoted to director of reservations sales and was recently promoted to director of sales.

Air France offers more facilities

AIR FRANCE wishes to inform its passengers that an advance check-in by phone, fax or Minitel, is available from Paris Charles de Gaulle or Paris Orly airports. The passenger should have a hand-baggage only and a firm reservation. With only one phone call the boarding pass will be available at any Air France sales desk at the airport or in the lounges.

Financial Markets — Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin
Date: 14/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0885	1.0937

Other Currencies — Date: 14/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8740
Lebanese Lira*	0.044380	0.044650
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1895
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3270
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2080	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma*	0.2815	0.2845
Cypriot Pound	1.4765	1.4845

* Per 100

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

Dream Team III opens with Argentina

ATLANTA (R) — The United States men's Olympic basketball team was placed in the same group with Croatia and Lithuania in the draw held Tuesday by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games and FIBA.

The latest edition of the U.S. 'Dream Team' of National Basketball Association stars begins defence of its Olympic championship in Group A, along with Croatia, Lithuania, Argentina, China and Angola.

Group B will consist of Brazil, Yugoslavia, Greece, Puerto Rico, Australia and Korea.

Professional players were first allowed to compete in the Olympic basketball tournament at the 1992 Barcelona games, where the original U.S. Dream Team romped to gold.

The current Dream Team has 10 of its 12 roster spots filled, with the other two to be determined later. Magic Johnson, a member of the Barcelona Dream Team who returned to the Los Angeles Lakers last week, has openly campaigned for one of the remaining spots.

Already on the roster for the heavy gold medal favourites are Hakeem Olajuwon of the Houston Rockets, Shaquille O'Neal of the Orlando Magic and David Robinson of the San Antonio Spurs at centre. The Nigerian-born Olajuwon became a U.S. citizen last year.

The guards are Penny Hardaway of Orlando, Reggie Miller of the Indiana Pacers and John Stockton of the Utah Jazz. The forwards are Grant Hill of the Detroit Pistons, Karl Malone of Utah, Scottie Pippen of the Chicago Bulls and Glenn Robinson of the Milwaukee Bucks.

"This past summer I was in Europe and saw Lithuania and Croatia play and those are some good teams," said U.S. men's Olympic coach Lenny Wilkens, head coach of the Atlanta Hawks. "We're not going to take anything for granted."

Croatia features Toni Kukoc of the Chicago Bulls and Dino Radja of the Boston Celtics. The Lithuanian team will include veteran Olympians Sarunas Marciulionis of the Sacramento Kings and Arvydas Sabonis of the Portland Trail Blazers.

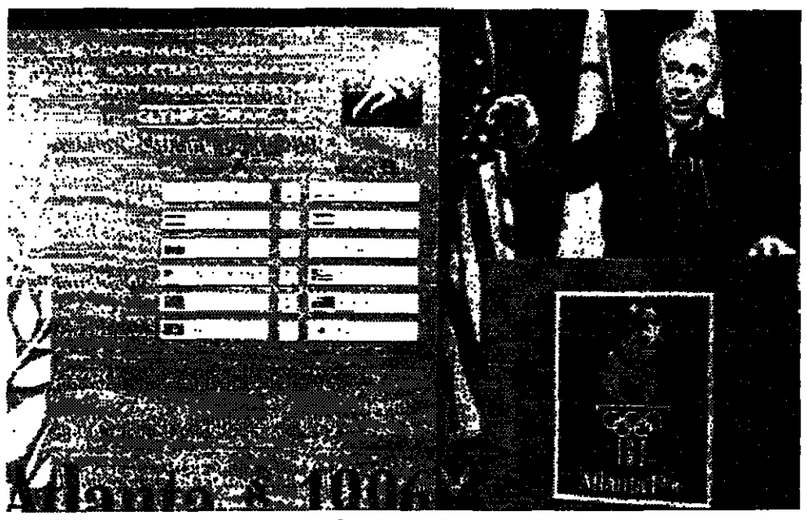
Yugoslavia, led by Lakers centre Vlade Divac and Miami Heat guard Sasha Danilovic, is favoured in Group B.

"The U.S. will have another Dream Team so they are the team to beat," said Divac. "We would be very happy to finish in second place."

In the women's dream, the United States was placed in Group B with Ukraine, Cuba, Zaire, Australia and Korea.

Group A in the women's field will consist of Russia, Canada, Japan, Brazil, China and Italy.

The Olympic basketball competition begins July 20.



Dave Maggard, Managing Director of Sports for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, answers media questions after the Federation Internationale de Basketball Association named the Olympic basketball pairings on Tuesday in Atlanta for the 1996 Centennial Summer Olympic Games (Reuters photo)

Atlanta Games have 'official' problems

Two official sponsors of the Atlanta Games are having problems that could affect the centennial Games.

Delta Air Lines, the official carrier of the 1996 Olympics, is negotiating with its pilots union on a new deal. Pilots are threatening a walkout that could complicate travel plans around the time of the Games.

Delta handles 70 per cent of air traffic into the Olympic host city and employs about 20,000 people, making it Atlanta's largest private employer.

The company wants pilots to accept a seven per cent day cut.

Results of a strike authorisation vote are set for next week.

At the same time, the official snack foods of the Olympics are also beset with trouble. Beer maker Anheuser-Busch is planning to shut down the money-losing Eagle Snacks division.

Eagle had already signed a deal for its chips and pretzels to be used as snacks to Olympic athletes and officials. Items from inventory are expected to be used.

Most of the manufacturing plants are being sold to rival Frito-Lay, but do not expect that snackmaker to take over the Olympic deal. They are owned by Pepsico, the corporate rival of Atlanta-based Olympic sponsor Coca-Cola.

Olympic outfits already controversial: Olympic apparel is drawing controversy already, brinnging back memories of U.S. basketball players draping themselves in their national flag to cover a sponsor logo they did not support.

Already a U.S. athletics team outfit has been pulled after controversy over a logo that was a U.S. flag with the white stars in a blue field replaced by the corporate logo of shoemaker Nike.

Nike plans a $35 million advertising blitz during the Olympics to promote new cushioned shoes that will be worn by Anferenee "Penny" Hardaway.

Rival Reebok claimes 3,000 Olympians will use their footwear. Nike claims 1,000 Olympians will wear their shoes

Atlanta gets extra Olympic TV: NBC network will televisive 180 hours of Olympic coverage to U.S. homes, but their station here will have an extra 20 hours of coverage exclusive to the host city area.

That means those here can watch more than 11 hours a day of Olympic event coverage. And officials expect lots of televisions to be used.

The local electricity provider says enough extra power will be furnished to the city to run 1,000 refrigerators for 575 years.

Luxury Olympic deals pitched in classifieds: Tickets are rooms are plentiful here for the Olympic Games, if you are able to pay the prices.

Classified advertisements in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution newspaper are plentiful. But the prices go from $1,800 a night for homes here to a comparatively mild $350 per bedroom for apartments.

Of course, you need to make certian you have tickets. Corporate suites remain available at $30,000 for prime venues. One ad offers tickets and housing for boxing, rowing and the closing ceremonies for $20,000.

Tickets remain available at face value from the organisers by telephone for selected events. Such orders must be from the official Olympic credit card sponsors.

Finals remain available in five sports: shooting, yachting, canoe-kayak, modern pentathlon and women's football. A total of 3.7 million tickets remain unsold, mostly in field hockey and baseball.

In addition to ticket prices, there is a one dollar handling free and a $10 fee for first-time purchasers.

Olympic equestrian venue to be redone: Olympic organisers promised a complete renovation of the Olympic show jumping venue after an International Equestrian Federation official declared the facility unfit for U.S. trials.

Two U.S. Olympic qualifying events were moved to Palm Beach, Florida, after an investigation into complaints by several top riders that footing was too deep and gave way as horses leaped over obstacles.

Trapattoni walks out after defeat

CAGLIARTI, Sardinia (R) — Giovanni Trapattoni, one of Italy's most revered coaches, walked out on struggling serie a club Cagliari on Tuesday after their weekend thrashing by his old employers Juventus.

It was the first time that Trapattoni, winner of an unrivalled six league titles with Juventus and one with Internazionale Milan, had quit a club without completing a full season at the helm.

"When I arrived at the club this morning I did not expect to have to hand in my resignation," Trapattoni said before calming a flight back to Milan.

Trapattoni, who joined Cagliari last summer after a disappointing season with Bayern Munich, said he had decided to quit after meeting senior club officials and realising he no longer had their full backing.

"When I arrived in Cagliari I knew I was a hostage to fortune. And that's how it has turned out. I now realise I acted hastily accepting this experience, above all when I promised ambitious targets and the UEFA CUP."

The move caused consternation among Trapattoni's colleagues.

Sampdoria coach Sven-Goran Eriksson, whose team play Cagliari in the league next weekend, said Trapattoni's resignation was a "sign of the changing times.

"Everyone's job is under discussion, even those who win," he said. "Look at (Nevio) Scala who has taken Parma to the top and yet whose future is constantly being discussed."

The club's 4-1 thrashing by Juventus on Sunday was the latest in a series of poor results. Cagliari have lost their last three away league games by four-goal margins.

Trapattoni, who won two league titels as a player with AC Milan, brought Juventus the European Cup and every other European trophy, including two UEFA Cups.

He also won the UEFA Cup with Inter.

But his job had been seen increasingly at risk in the Italian media who had linked him with Roma.

The club said Adriano Bardin, Cagliari's goalkeeping coach, took charge of Tuesday's regular training session.

Trapattoni's departure was a far cry from the day he arrived at Cagliari when thousands of fans, hoping for a return to the club's distant glory days, turned out to welcome him.

The club had advertised his return by printing his photograph on the city's local buses under the slogan 'Trap, make us dream.' The dream was shortlived.



Orlando Magic forward Dennis Scott (centre) has the ball knocked loose by Denver Nuggets' defenders Dikembe Mutombo (left) and Antonio McDyess (right) during first quarter action in the Orlando Arena (Reuters photo)

Jazz beat Spurs in last second of overtime

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (R) — John Stockton's three-point leaner with five-tenths of a second left in overtime gave the Utah Jazz a 114-111 win over the San Antonio Spurs Tuesday as the NBA season resumed after the All-Star break with a whopping 12 games.

Karl Malone had six of his 21 points in OT including a jumper to tie the score at 111-111 win with 48 secons to play.

Sean Elliott tallied 29 points and David Robinson added 22 and 17 rebounds for San Antonio, which had won five of its last six games. The Spurs had won both previous meetings with Utah this season.

The first three quarters featured 17 lead changes and 12 ties as neither team led by more than six points.

Stockton got 18 points, 16 assists and three steals and is four shy of becoming the league's all-time thefts leader.

Charles Smith, acquired by the Spurs from the New York Knicks last week, had to sit out the first half until paperwork was filed. He scored seven points in seven minutes in the second half. Monty Williams, also acquired in the trade, did not play.

In Orlando, Shaquille O'Neal scored 30 points and Nick Anderson 22 as the Orlando Magic moved within one game of the best home start in league history with a 116-91 thrashing of the Denver Nuggets.

Orlando improved to 26-0 at home. The 1946-47 Washington capitals opened the season with 27 consecutive home wins.

In Chicago, Michael Jordan scored 32 points and Scottie Pippen 26 as the Bulls ran their home winning streak to 30 games with a 111-98 victory over the Washington Bullets.

The Bulls improved to 23-0 at home this season and are four wins away from the record for home starts.

In Phoenix, Gary Payton had 23 points and 10 assists as the Seattle Supersonics defeated the Suns 102-98 for their third consecutive victory.

Hersey Hawkins had 21 points on 8-of-14 shooting from the field as Seattle defeated Phoenix for just the second time in the last six meetings.

Charles Barkley had 30 points and 12 rebounds for the Suns, who had a three-game win streak. He has double-doubles in all 12 games since returning from a toe injury and needs 21 more rebounds to become the 10th player in league history to record 20,000 points and 10,000 rebounds.

In Houston, Sam Cassell tallied 31 points and Clyde Drexler recorded his 21st career triple-double to lead the Rockets to a 121-106 victory over the Dallas Mavericks.

Drexler had 21 points, 14 rebounds and 12 assists for his third triple-double in the last seven games. Hakeem Olajuwon chipped in 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets, who had lost seven of their last 11 games.

In Cleveland, Danny Ferry scored 24 of his career-high 31 points on three-pointers and keyed a fourth-quarter run that lifted the Cavaliers to their fifth straight victory, 110-100 over the Charlotte Hornets.

Ferry had eight of Cleveland's 14 three-pointers, both team records. Charlotte made 12 as the teams combined for the most three-pointers in a regulation game. The all-time high of 28 was set by Dallas and Houston in double overtime in 1995.

At Indiana, Armon Gilliam scored 17 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter as the New Jersey Nets snapped the Pacers' 17-game home winning streak with a 101-92 victory.

New Jersey snapped a six-game losing streak at Indiana, winning three for the first time since 1992. The Nets improved to just 6-21 on the road with their third win in 10 games.

Reggie Miller scored 29 for Indiana.

In Portland, Chris Mullin scored 25 points and Latrell Sprewell sank two free throws with 14 seconds to play as the Golden State Warriors scored the final six points to edge the Trail Blazers 99-98.

Sprewell finished with 19 points as the Warriors won for the third time in four games.

In Sacramento, Tom Gugliotta's jumper snapped a tie with 58 seconds to play as the Minnesota Timberwovles defeated the slumping Kings 94-90.

RESULTS

Cleveland	110	Charlotte	100
New Jersey	101	Indiana	92
Toronto	98	Miami	87
Orlando	121	Denver	93
Houston	121	Dallas	106
Chicago	111	Washington	98
Philadelphia	104	Milwaukee	101
Utah	114	San Antonio	111 (OT)
Seattle	102	Phoenix	98
Golden State	99	Portland	98
Boston	108	Clippers	94
Minnesota	94	Sacramento	90

Kasparov draws 3rd game

PHILADELPHIA (R) — The third game in a six-game chess match between world champion Garry Kasparov and an IBM supercomputer called Deep Blue ended in a draw on Tuesday

The draw was agreed after 39 moves in a rook and pawn endgame in which neither the Russian grandmaster nor Deep Blue could gain an advantage. The $500,000 contest now stands level at 1½ points each.

Deep Blue, which can review as many as 50 billion positions within three minutes, made chess history on Saturday when it convincingly beat Kasparov in the first game of the week-long match.

Kasparov, 32, won the second game on Sunday when he had the advantage of the white pieces.

A brief sketch of Russian world chess master Garry Kasparov and his IBM supercomputer opponent.

Kasparov:

☆ Born in Baku, April 13, 1963, Garry Kimovich Kasparov, a Russian, is the son of a Jewish father and Armenian mother.

☆ Takes up the game in 1967. Star pupil at a school run by Mikhail Botvinnik, World Chess Champion from 1948-1963. Kasparov becomes Soviet Junior Champion in 1976.

☆ Winner at age 17 of World Junior Championship in 1980. Shares first place in the Soviet Championship in 1981, becomes a perceived threat to the USSR's top man, Anatoly Karpov.

☆ Kasparov challenges Karpov for World Champion title in 1984. Winner must take six games, no draws allowed. Kasparov trails 5-0, but comes back to win three games after 48 encounters.

☆ Match declared ended February 15, 1985, "without results," after the president of the International Chess Federation intervenes.

☆ Kasparov wins rematch later that year. Becomes the youngest-ever World Chess Champion at 22. Has defended the title five times since.

☆ Kasparov breaks away from the International Chess Federation to set up the Professional Chess Association in 1993.

☆ The star has his first public loss to a computer in March 1994 during a high-speed, blitz chess game in which the player has five minutes to make all his moves.

☆ Kasparov was knocked out of an August 1994 PCA Grand Prix tournament playing a 25-minute game against the "Chess Genius" programme.

IBM's "Deep Blue" supercomputer:

☆ Graduate students at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania create predecessor, "Deep Thought," in 1988.

☆ IBM begins working with "Deep Thought" in 1989 as a way to explore use of parallel processing to solve complex problems

☆ "Deep Thought" basic version has a chess engine containing 250 chips and two processors on a single circuit board.

☆ It is capable of analysing 750,000 positions per second or 10 half-moves ahead, for an international performance rating of 2450, placing it in the lower ranks of the world's grandmasters.

☆ In 1988 "Deep Thought" becomes the first computer to defeat a Grandmaster in a tournament.

☆ Kasparov plays a two-game exhibition match in October 1989 against an experimental six-processor version of "Deep Thought" capable of searching more than two million positions per second, Kasparov wins.



Michael Chang

Philippoussis is Australian great hope

SAN JOSE (R) — Hard-hitting Mark Philippoussis showed Tuesday why he is Australia's best hope to enter the year-end top 10 after an eight-year drought, outslugging American Steve Bryan 6-3, 6-3 in the first round of the $328,000 Sybase Open.

"He's gotten immensely better," said Bryan, who has played Philippoussis four times. "I've played a lot of top players and he definitely has the game to be in the top five. Nobody hits the ball harder."

If the 6-foot-4 (1.93 metres) Philippoussis and third seed Michael Chang get past their second-round opponents, the two will meet in the quarter-finals on Friday.

On Tuesday, Chang cruised past South African Grant Stafford 6-3, 6-2, Chang, who recently reached the final of the Australian Open and led the U.S. Davis Cup team to victory over Mexico, is looking forward to the match.

"Mark's playing great tennis," Chang said. "He's young, he hits hard and he's very dangerous. If everything is working for him it will be tough to slow him down."

Recently, all-time Aussie great John Newcombe declared that it would take Philippoussis only 18 months to break into the top 10. With legends like Newcombe, Rod Laver and Ken Rosewall singing his praises, the spotlight is on the shy 19-year-old of Greek ancestry.

"I have the potential to get there" into the top five, said Philippoussis, whose ranking rose to 27 after shocking then world number two Pete Sampras in the third round of the Australian open a few weeks ago. "Right now it comes down to getting more experience. I don't want to rush anything."

Against Bryan, Philippoussis took a 5-0 lead in the first set before dropping three successive games as his huge forehand and 130 mph (210 kph) first serve briefly deserted him. But he held on to take the first set 6-3.

The second set was no different as the young Aussie went up 5-1 with an all-court attack and then briefly lost his control to go ot 5-3. Bryan tried to outsmart the teenager, but Philippoussis regained his composure and served and volleyed the match out.

"When I played him last year, I knew if I could just make my return, and keep him in baseline rallies, I'd have a good chance," Bryan said. "Tonight I felt like I was hitting against a brick wall."

Although the Australian media are pointing to Philippoussis as the man who will bring respectability back to Australian tennis, Philippoussis said he isn't folding under the pressure.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: 634144
PHILADELPHIA
Tom Hanks
in
Forrest Gump
Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 9:00 p.m.

CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA
Nabieleh Oubead/safiyah Al Omaree/Farouq Feeshawi
in
Atabeht Al Settat
(ladie's Step)
Arabic
Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:45, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
On Deadly Ground
Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
* Jim Carrie
Shows: 2:30, 6:15

AMMOUN THEATRE & CINEMA/TEL: 618274 - 618275
Adel Imam & Yusra
in
Birds of Darkness
(Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre
TEL: 625155
"Ahlan Tatbie" play
Welcome Normalisation
Shows: 8:30 p.m.
For reservation call 625155

Capriati comeback put off

PARIS (AFP) — Jennifer Capriati's bid to put her tennis career back on the rails at the Paris Gaz de France Indoor Open ended in heartbreak on Tuesday when she was forced to pull out of the event at the eleventh-hour after sustaining an injury.

The 20-year-old American had been scheduled to play her first competitive match in 14 months against Belgium's 25th-ranked Sabine Appelmans but she strained a muscle between her hamstring and lower back running for a ball during a training session earlier in the day.

Although she tried another warm-up session shortly before she was due to check in at the Coubertin Stadium — she broke down in pain.

"It is very unfortunate," she said, adding: "But when you have been away for a while — your muscles are tight. I felt a pain between my lower back and hamstring."

"I am very disappointed. I couldn't wait to get back and start playing again. I've had such a warm welcome here and I've really missed my time on the tour — missed playing."

Capriati, the world's sixth-ranked player until she quit the game after being beaten in the first round of the 1993 United States Open, said that she still intended to play again and promised that she would be back in action as soon as the injury cleared up.

"I've taken a long break but now I'm ready to come back. It is still inside me but I'll take it one step at a time and see how it goes.. I just want to enjoy it and be happy."

Capriati, whose first bid to relaunch her career in Philadelphia in November 1994 failed when she was beaten in the first round by Germany's Anke Huber, underwent psychiatric treatment and took a rehabilitation course when she was detained for shoplifting and arrested on a drugs charge shortly after quitting the game.

Her request for a wild-card for the Paris tournament had taken many by surprise — and although her late sudden withdrawal prompted some cynicism many top players genuinely welcomed the news of her return.

The tournament's second-seed Anke Huber, who hit with Capriati on Monday, said afterwards: "She is in



Jennifer Capriati

really good shape and it is great that she has decided to come back."

Capriati's domineering father, Stefano, who was responsible for his daughter's entry into professional ranks just before her 14th birthday, has been coaching her back to form by staging regular training sessions in Florida.

He said that thought the injury would not prove to be too serious and that his daughter would stage her return in Essen next week.

Capriati, who is hoping to be able to defend her Olympic title in Atlanta later this year, rewrote the record books when she played in the 1990 French Open becoming the youngest-ever Grand Slam tournament semi-finalist as a 14-year-old.

The following year she also became the youngest-ever semi-finalist at Wimbledon and the youngest player to reach the last four at the United States Open.

Capriati beat Steffi Graf 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 for the gold medal at the Barcelona Olympics.

Her place in the Paris tournament was taken by lucky-loser Melanie Schnell but the Austrian went out in straight-sets to Appelmans.

On court, Judith Weisner of Austria and French teenager Nathalie Dechy provided the upsets.

The experienced Wiesner put out fifth-seed Jana Novotna of the Czech Republic while 16-year-old former Orange Bowl champion Dechy defeated 1994 Wimbledon semi-finalist Lori McNeil of the United States.

Novotna's notorious nervousness surfaced when she served for the match at 5-4 in the second set against the 29-year-old Austrian. But three lunging volleys failed to find their target and Wiesner broke back to 5-5. She never looked back reeling off the next five games to triumph 1-6, 7-5, 6-3 in just under two hours.

The French capital is not proving a happy hunting ground for the player who wept on the shoulder of the Dutchess of Kent after losing a final she should have won against Steffi Graf in 1993.

When she played in last year's French Open at Roland Garros she threw away a 5-0, 4-0 third set lead to lose to Chanda Rubin of the United States in the third round.

McNeil, 32 and the oldest player in the draw, lost confidence against an opponent willing to run down every ball and finally surrendered 3-6, 6-4, 4-6.

Dechy, born in Guadeloupe and coached by Gail Lovera, moved into a second-round showdown against compatriot and seventh-seeded Nathalie Tauziat. Tauziat beat Barbara Rittner of Germany 6-3, 6-1.

Wiesner now plays Miriam Oremans. The 53rd ranked Dutch player survived a dramatic recovery by South Africa's big-hitting Mariaan De Swardt.

De Swardt, 24, recent quarter-finalist at Sydney and ranked 23 place above Oremans, stormed back and saved three match points after trailing 3-6 in the second-set tie-break.

But she left her effort too late and tired in the third set to enable Oremans to complete a 6-1, 6-7 (6/8), 6-2 win.

Skier, official suffer serious injuries

SIERA NEVADA (AFP) — Russian downhill racer Tatiana Lebedeva and an International Ski Federation delegate were taken to hospital with serious injuries in a training accident at the World Ski Championships on Wednesday.

The Hospital de Traumatologia in Granada said that Lebedeva suffered a perifragramentary fracture of the upper third part of the right tibia and a fracture of the second metacarpal of the right foot. Harald Schoenhaar, the German born American ISF delegate, has a splintered tibia and fibular.

Slow motion video of the accident saw Lebedeva, on a training run for Sunday's women's donwhill, taking a jump just as the official walked the course. She was travelling at over 100kmh at the time.

"She tried to react and turned her skis away," veteran Austrian racer Karl Schranz said.

In the split second the skier had to react she was unable to prevent the collision and the skies slammed down between his legs and cut him down. The impact threw him into the air and he landed on his neck and upper back.

Premier League concludes Friday

Will Wihdat retain trophy tonight?

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The fight for the country's Premier League soccer trophy will be over by the end of the weekend when the results of Al Wihdat, Al Ramtha and Al Faisali determine the top standings of the season.

The strongest contender are of course Al Wihdat who have maintained an unbeaten record in the second leg of the competition and will face Al Baqaa Thursday hoping to begin celebrations by scoring a victory to secure their fifth overall and second consecutive title.

Al Baqaa have already been relegated and Al Wihdat's victory will automatically secure them the title regardless of the results of their two closest rivals.

So what are Al Faisali's and Al Ramtha's chances of winning the title?

— Al Ramtha will win the title if they beat Al Qadissieh provided Al Wihdat lose their match. If however, Al Ramtha win their match and Al Wihdat draw then both teams will tie in overall points and will have to play a title-deciding match.

— Al Faisali's chances are slimmer and rest on their win over Al Ahli, and Al Wihdat's and Al Ramtha's defeat. In that case Al Faisali will tie Al Wihdat in overall points and play a title-deciding match.

While these calculations should be taken into consideration as nothing is to be taken for granted in the world of sports, Al Wihdat's chance of clinching the title Thursday seems the most probable thing.

Al Wihdat have the best match record after losing only two matches in the season yet they only topped the standings two weeks ago and for the first time in years the championship will be determined on the results of the final week.

In case Al Wihdat win the title Al Ramtha's and Al Faisali's results will also play a factor in determining the runner-up.

The other teams are already out of the top three and will only play to better their standings. The last four have been relegated. Former First Division club Kufrsoum maintained their place for the second consecutive year, while Al Hussein who had led throughout most of the first leg disappointed their fans. Al Ahli improved in the final weeks while Al Qadissieh maintained a halfway standing.

Al Wihdat are the best team in the second leg of the competition. Al Faisali are second and their only loss was to Al Wihdat — a crucial result that may have cost them the title. Surprisingly, Al Ahli are the third best team of the second leg. After languishing near the relegation zone they steadily improved their record and assisted Al Wihdat in getting to the top by their 1-0 win over then leaders Al Ramtha.

As the 1995 season competitions draw to close Friday three teams will be find bonuses awaiting them.

— The champion will receive JD 5,000.

— The runner-up JD 2,000.

— The ideal team JD 2,500.

— The ideal player JD 500.

There is no award for the season's top scorer this year.

Al Jalil's Ibrahim Abdul had still tops the list with a record 17 goals, Al Ahli's Bassam Khatib is second with 13, Al Faisali's Jiryes Tadros is third with 12, while Al Hussein's Abdullah Shiyyad is fourth with 11.

Russeifa score first win

Al Russeifa, the team that has the worst record in the league at 18-88 scored a 3-2 win over Sahab Tuesday in the first match of the Premier League's 22nd and final week. The win gave Al Russeifa their first three points in the standings after failing to score a win or draw in their past matches.

Schedule of final week

Wihdat-Baqaa	Thursday 15/2 Amman Stadium
Ahli-Faisali	Thursday 15/2 Amman Stadium
Qadissieh-Ramtha	Friday 16/2 Amman Stadium
Hussein-Jalil	Friday 16/2 Irbid
Jazireh-Kufrsoum	Friday 16/2 Salt

Standings before Thursday's matches

	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
Wihdat	21	13	6	2	40	20	45
Ramtha	21	13	4	4	33	12	43
Faisali	21	12	6	3	41	12	42
Kufrsoum	21	9	9	3	30	21	36
Qadissieh	21	10	5	6	37	23	35
Ahli	21	9	7	5	36	22	34
Jazireh	21	9	6	6	38	24	33
Hussein	21	8	7	6	36	19	31
☆Baqaa	21	6	3	12	30	49	21
☆Sahab	22	2	9	11	20	40	15
☆Jalil	21	2	4	15	28	63	10
☆Russeifa	22	1	-	21	18	88	3

☆ Relegated to First Division

U.S. steroid swimmer banned

ORLANDO (AFP) — U.S. Swimming imposed a two-year ban on 15-year-old Jessica Foschi here Tuesday following an appeal hearing on her earlier two-year probation for testing positive for steroids.

The ruling, which followed 20 hours of testimony from 19 speakers over two days, brings Foschi's punishment in line with FINA regulations and makes her ineligible for the Atlanta Olympics.

It likely will touch off a legal battle as Foschi fights for a place in next month's Olympic qualifying meet at Indianapolis. Foshci has vowed she never knowingly took a banned substance.

"I have never taken a banned or illegal substance," Foschi told the U.S. Swimming panel. "If there is a problem in swimming, you're not helping the problem at all because I am not part of it."

The case gave U.S. swimming a black eye after officials had criticised China for its history of drug positives in the past five years, then failed to live up to FINA minimum punishment standards for one of their own.

"This is not a vendetta to get this poor child," U.S. swimming president Carol Zaleski said. "All I am asking is the rules be upheld."

Australian swim star Samantha Riley has also tested positive for a banned substance, another blow to one of China's staunchest critics. Riley also denies she knowingly took any banned drug.

U.S. Swimming ordered Foschi banned from August 4 of last year and all of her competition records since then will be stricken from record books. Foschi swims in the 400- and 800-metres and is an Olympic contender.

Foschi can appeal the decision to U.S. Olympic Committee executive director Dick Schultz, who likely would send the matter to an arbitrator.

Foschi has also already filed a lawsuit to pave the way if she was banned, similar to the court fight Butch Reynolds fought to be allowed the chance to compete in the 1992 Olympic athletics trials.

The courts could not rule to allow to run in Barcelona, but with this year's Games on U.S. soil, Foschi might be able to press her case to the U.S. supreme court with a chance of getting an Olympic berth.

A three-member panel defied FINA rules last November by giving Foschi only a two-year probation following a tearful appeal by the swimmer that she had no idea how mesterolone got into her system at the U.S. nationals last August.

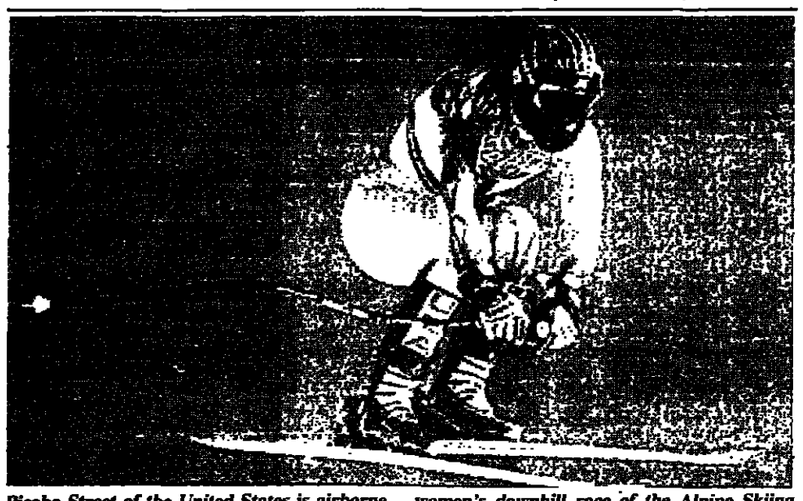
U.S. Swimming called the punishment inadequate and convened an appeal board for harsher measures.

Foschi and her father, Robert testified over the past two days that she had tested negative in tests conducted after the initial positive report. He said his daughter might have been sabotaged by a rival coach.

Charles Yesalis, a university sports science expert, testified that for the first time in 17 years of studying steroid cases, "the best explanation I can arrive at is that she was sabotaged."

Foschi's attorneys argued that not only the presence of drugs, but an intent to cheat, must be shown by U.S. Swimming. Zaleski said such a ruling would end the effectiveness of drug tests.

"If we have to prove knowledge and intent, then we can forget about drug testing," she said.



Picabo Street of the United States is airborne during the first official practice for the women's downhill race of the Alpine Skiing World Championships (Reuters photo)

There's nothing funny about Picabo Street

SIERRA NEVADA (AFP) — Defined by song titles, Picabo Street is ski racing's "Boy Named Sue." Give a kid a funny name and she's bound to grow up tough.

"Make me tough? it did in the beginning. In school I had a tough time. Kids can be ruthless and they came up with the meanest things to say to me about my name," admitted Street.

"I beat a lot of kids up for making fun of my name. I got so tired of it, it turned to violence. Now I'm older it become more of a pleasure to have an unusual name," she added.

A superb racer, Street won the Super-G bronze medal on Monday and is expected to be high in the rankings in Sunday's World Championship downhill. She's one of ski racing's real personalities and is as unconventional as her upbringing.

Daughter of free wheeling '60's parents, Street was just called "Baby Girl" until she needed a passport at aged six. Then they opted for "Picabo," an Indian dialect word for "Shining Waters."

Street shines, but she's got fire in her belly and plenty of guts as a result of all those taunts.

As a child Street was self confessed tomboy and developed her competitive streak playing with and ski racing against the boys.

"I had to fight for everything I got when I was little. I got to play football with the guys and if I wanted to play I had to run fast. It seemed like I was always trying to catch up."

She rarely has to catch up any more.

Street walked away with the World Cup downhill title last season and the United States Olympic Committee named her Sportswoman of the Year.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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WE DO THE IMPOSSIBLE

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ 8 7
♡ K 8 4 2
◇ A
♣ A K Q J 9 5

WEST
♠ A K 4
♡ J 10 9 7 3
◇ Q 6
♣ 7 6 3

EAST
♠ 10 9 6 3 2
♡ Void
◇ J 10 8 4 3 2
♣ 8 4

SOUTH
♠ Q J 5
♡ A Q 6 5
◇ K 9 7 5
♣ 10 2

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	1♡	Pass
3♡	Pass	4♡	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: King of ♠

When most declarers encounter a bad trump break, they head for the hills. On many occasions, however, the evil split can be overcome by careful play. Here's an example.

The North-South auction was straightforward, except that South chose to respond in the four-card major rather than the minor. North made an invitational jump raise and South, with a balanced hand and soft values, had no interest beyond game.

West started off with three rounds of spades, declarer's queen winning the last. The contract was cold as long as trumps were no worse than 4-1, but declarer received a shock when, on the ace of hearts, East discarded a spade. We know of some who would now simply concede down one, but South was made of sterner stuff. If West started with three clubs and two diamonds, the contract could still be brought home.

After clearing the ace of diamonds, declarer crashed the ace and king of clubs and ruffed a club. A club was discarded on the king of diamonds, leaving this position:

NORTH
♠ —
♡ K 8 4
◇ —
♣ J

WEST
♠ —
♡ J 10 9 7
◇ —
♣ —

EAST
♠ 10
♡ —
◇ J 10 8
♣ —

SOUTH
♠ —
♡ Q 6
◇ 9 7
♣ —

Declarer led a diamond, forcing West to ruff high as dummy's club was discarded. Now West was forced to return a high trump, won in hand with the queen, and a finesse of dummy's trump eight allowed South to hold West to just one trump trick. Magic.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

A newly-established insurance company in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan requires immediately new university graduates with economics, administration , management and English degrees to join its insurance staff.
Interested candidates should send their detailed resumes in English with a recent photograph to the following address:

Personal Affairs Supervisor
P.O.Box 20767 - Amman 11118

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST
NATIONS UNIES OFFICE DE SECOURS ET DE TRAVAUX POUR LES REFUGIES DE PALESTINE DANS LE PROCHE-ORIENT

THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF & WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST IS RECRUITING AT ITS HEADQUARTERS IN AMMAN:

Head, Social Services, Grade: 20. (VN#HQ[A] 11/96)
Fixed Term Three Years: (Re-Advertisement)

(Monthly take home pay about JD954 plus dependency allowance; plus monthly provident fund JD200 payable at end of service; compulsory medical insurance).

DUTIES: The incumbent of this post is the Agency's senior social development professional, reporting directly to the Director of Relief and Social Services, managing a team of three social development experts at Headquarters and technically responsible for developmental social welfare programmes and projects implemented by Field staff in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Palestinian Territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The social services programme includes community development and institution building; poverty alleviation; women in development; community-based rehabilitation and integration of persons with disabilities; and family casework. The Head of the Social Services Office is responsible for input into policy formulation; situation analyses and needs assessments; appropriate strategies and specific objectives; technical guidelines for policy implementation; training of social workers and programme managers in the five Field offices; indicators for programme monitoring; and evaluation of programme impact and achievement. S/he co-ordinates with other UNRWA programmes and inter-governmental and non-governmental partners in joint social development ventures, and represents the Agency at relevant United Nations and other professional conferences. Administratively, s/he is responsible for the Office budget, and advises on staffing. Logistical and other resource needs.

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED: University degree in social welfare or related field, with special emphasis on the application of social work insights and methodologies to developmental programmes, with at least ten years experience in applying that knowledge including: 1) Practical experience in planning, implementation and evaluation in one or more of the following sectors: community development and institution building, poverty alleviation, rehabilitation and integration of the disabled, developmental women's programmes; and in training local counterparts to run such programmes. 2) At least five years in a senior supervisory capacity in a large international, gevernmental or non-governmental organisation promoting developmental social services. Excellent command of written and spoken English and Arabic and first-rate communication skills.
DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS: Thorough knowledge of the Near East environment and cultures; post-graduate degree or diploma directly relevant to one or more aspects of the social services listed above; computer literacy. Will be required to travel extensively in the Agency's area of operations in the Near East.
N.B.: The post was previously advertised at Grade 18. It has now been upgraded to Grade 20.

Candidates are requested to submit a detailed UNRWA Personal History Forum not later than **13 March 1996** to:

The office of the Coordinator, UNRWA Headquarters Amman, Attention; Personnel Officer, P.O. Box 140157 (Blader Wadi Seer), Amman 11814, Jordan.

Full consideration will be given to disabled candidates whose disability does not mitigate the effective performance of the duties of the job. Priority will be given to fully qualified registered Palestinians. UNRWA welcomes applications equally from men and women.

SCUBA DIVERS IN JORDAN

Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society (JREDS) has the pleasure of inviting you to its reception held at the Marriott Hotel on Saturday 17th of February at 8:00 pm.
All scuba divers are welcome to join us and learn more about JREDS activities and future plans.
Pls show diving licence at entrance.
For more information please call at **684376**

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Jet Set announces the arrival of the new Jones New York collection, and it's seasonal sale.
On the occasion of Eid El Fitr.

Located at Abdoun Circle, Ra'fat Centre. Tel 079 31671

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
Invitation To All Australian Citizens Living In Jordan To Register

All Australian citizens resident in Jordan are invited to register with the Australian Embassy. Citizens who have registered previously and whose details have since changed are invited to notify the Embassy of their new details.

Registration can be conducted either in person between 0800 - 1400, Sunday - Thursday, or if this is not possible, by telephone on 673246/7 or by fax on 673260. Please bring your Australian passport with you when registering.

The Australian Embassy is located between 4th and 5th Circles, off Zahran Street, Jabal Amman (next to the Ministry of Social Development).

هكذا من الأصل

Iraq optimistic about U.N. talks

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The Iraqi delegation chief at oil-for-food talks here seemed optimistic that a deal was close, but Western diplomats at the talks said his optimism was "premature."

If successful, the talks will lead to the first partial lifting of a crippling oil embargo in force since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Participants at a meeting here Tuesday between Iraqi delegation chief Abdul Amir Al Anbari and eight non-aligned Security Council members said he told them that a "memorandum of understanding" might be ready by the end of next week.

But the diplomats said Wednesday that report might be "premature," and part of "Iraqi propaganda" as substantive issues such as oil exports remained to be discussed in detail.

U.N. chief negotiator Hans Corell was later Wednesday to brief the 15-member Security Council for the first time on the closed-door talks which opened here Feb. 6.

Western diplomats said Security Council members were "irritated" by the lack of information from the United Nations while Iraq continued to comment almost daily on the negotiations focusing on the implementation of Resolution 986, adopted in April last year.

Mr. Anbari told the non-aligned group that Baghdad was not seeking to modify Resolution 986 which it had previously objected to on the grounds that it infringed on Iraqi sovereignty.

The resolution notably provides for Iraq to export one billion dollars worth of oil per quarter, but it must spend $150 million of the money on aid to be distributed among Kurds in northern Iraq under international control.

Diplomats said that the Iraqis were attempting to get round the resolution by seeking to monitor the distribution of aid themselves. But the Security Council insists that the resolution cannot be amended.

Diplomats also said that Iraqi attempts to hold further negotiations in Baghdad "would be resisted."

U.N. spokesman Ahmad Fawzi on Wednesday did not say how long the current round would last, adding that "they will continue until such time an agreement is reached." He told a news briefing he had "no information" that Wednesday would be the last day.

Mr. Anbari left the U.N. building after a morning session on Wednesday, but working groups continued in his absence, Mr. Fawzi said. Another session was scheduled for Wednesday afternoon at 5:00 p.m. (2200 GMT), he said.

Also Wednesday, the Security Council was to meet later to continue discussions on a draft resolution that would tighten import-export regulations with Baghdad under resolutions governing the main sanctions regime against Iraq which have been in force for more than five years.

Iraq must comply with disarmament requirements spelled out in Resolution 687, adopted after the 1991 Gulf war, before the total oil and trade embargo can be lifted.

A Western diplomat said that while the draft resolution on arms was not directly linked to resolution 986, it would have an effect on its implementation as it would require Iraq to indicate the "end user" of imported products.

In this way, the United Nations would be able to ensure that all the money generated by oil exports under 986 would be used for humanitarian purposes.

The U.N. agency monitoring Iraqi compliance with disarmament requirements under U.N. resolutions had asked the Security Council to close loopholes which it said had already enabled Iraq to use medical supplies for its biological weapons programme.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday addresses a meeting after an iftar hosted by the Federation of the Jordanian Chambers of Commerce (Petra photo)

Crown Prince stresses role of private sector

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday said the numerous initiatives taken at the national and regional arenas would not have been possible without the keenness of His Majesty King Hussein to safeguard Jordan's stability and to nourish its creative capabilities.

At an iftar banquet hosted by the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce and attended by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti and several Cabinet members, Prince Hassan paid tribute to the Jordanian private sector, saying it played a key role in the national economy and at the Amman economic summit last October.

"Our message to the world is one of homogeneity and integration of all production potentials in the Jordanian family," the Crown Prince said, noting that the Jordanian economy managed to achieve positive results in terms of increasing the per capita income.

The Middle East and North Africa region, he said, is not different from other world regions and, based on two factors, are capable of achieving prosperity.

He said the first factor was represented in adopting suitable economic policies, sustaining these policies as well as clearly defining the goals of these policies.

The second, he added, relates to the capability of the countries of this region to cooperate and open their markets to each other with the objective of increasing trade exchanges between them in accordance with the policies of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), which Jordan is seeking to join.

He said Jordan's pursuit to join the organisation is based on its compliance with the economic reform programme and is aided by economic initiatives, summits and the partnership agreement with Europe.

Jordan hopes through joining the WTO to improve the performance of its economy and increase growth rates, said the Prince, who added that Jordan should always seek to market its national products in neighbouring countries.

"We should seek to enter new markets through investing in productive sectors and working on developing a comprehensive and convincing policy to develop the Jordanian industry," he said.

Federation President Haidar Issa Murad addressing the iftar party paid tribute to King Hussein and Prince Hassan's efforts to promote the role of the private sector, saying this enhanced Jordan's status at the regional and international levels.

Mr. Murad said representatives of the trade and industrial sectors in Jordan believe in the importance of coordination between them and with the public sector.

Turkish Islamists, conservatives agree on rotating premiership

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's pro-Islamic Welfare Party and the conservative Motherland Party Wednesday agreed in principle to form a coalition government based on a rotating premiership, sources close to both parties said.

"There is a general agreement that (Motherland leader Mesut) Yilmaz will become the first prime minister, and (Welfare leader Mecmettin) Erbakan will take over the post after a period of, say one year," one informed source said. "Still there are some points of disagreement." The two leaders will try to settle them during a meeting Thursday.

The sources said the Motherland Party was expected to hold the key foreign and defence ministries, while the Welfare Party would like to take over the education, interior and industry ministries. Chief economic posts were thought to be shared between the two.

Mr. Erkaban and Mr. Yilmaz met for three hours Wednesday but said they would not comment on their talks until after Thursday's meeting.

"We could not finish all topics during today's talks and will come together once again tomorrow," Mr. Erbakan told reporters.

The talks came after Motherland and the True Path Party of caretaker Prime Minister Tansu Ciller failed to reach agreement on forming a centre-right coalition government to exclude the Muslim fundamentalist party.

Mr. Erbakan, whose Welfare is the biggest political group with 158 deputies in the 550-seat parliament, had so far been unable to find a coalition partner.

Ms. Ciller's attempts to forge an alliance between her True Path Party and Motherland floundered over personal rivalry with Mr. Yilmaz, who refused to join any government with her at its head.

On Feb. 3, President Suleyman Demirel asked Mr. Yilmaz to form a government.

The president is empowered to dissolve parliament and call early elections if no government is formed within 45 days after Feb. 6, the date the current assembly was formed.

A government was not expected to be formed before two more weeks as the whole of next week coincides with the holidays ending Ramadan.

Ankara determined to finish dam project

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Wednesday it was determined to complete and ambitious project to build new dams on the Euphrates River despite opposition from Syria, which it accused of harbouring "terrorists."

"To distract international attention from its support for terrorism, Syria is trying to raise the water issue, although Turkey provides it with more than enough water," foreign ministry spokesman Nurettin Nurkan told a news briefing.

"For the prosperity of its people, Turkey is determined to complete its Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), which includes building new dams," Mr. Nurkan said.

Damascus has accused Ankara of undermining its water needs by building dams on the Euphrates and using extensive irrigation, allowing Syria to receive only a small amount of polluted water.

The Arab League, siding with Syria, has urged Turkey to sign a water allocation agreement with Damascus. In a 1987 document, Turkey pledged to provide Syria with a minimum of 500 cubic metres of Euphrates water per second.

"Throughout last year, Turkey let Syria receive much more water than its pledge of 500 cubic metres per second. Actually, Syria's concern is not related to water, but is political," Mr. Nurkan said.

Ankara says Mr. Ocalan, whose PKK is fighting for an independent Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey, and his aides live in Damascus.

The Euphrates stems from Turkey, passes via Syria, enters Iraq and merges with the Tigris River before reaching the Gulf.

Turkey launched the ambitious GAP in the late 1960s and aims to complete it in 2005.

NATO condems Serb boycott as 'serious violation' of peace accord

SARAJEVO (AFP) — IFOR commanders Wednesday condemned a Serb army boycott of NATO's Bosnia peace force as a "serious violation" of the Dayton accords, amid mounting concern about the impact of war-crimes arrests on Bosnia's peace process.

In the Hague, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ict) announced a May 7 date for the first trial of a war-crimes suspect from the Balkans' conflict, a Bosnian Serb named Dusan Tadic.

Officials for top war-crimes Prosecutor Richard Goldstone also announced the first war-crimes indictments against Bosnian Muslims would be submitted to a judge "in the coming weeks." So far the tribunal has indicted 47 Serbs and seven Croats.

Meanwhile Serb General Djordje Djukic and his deputy Colonel Aleksa Krsmanovic were being held by the ICT for questioning over war-crimes allegations, after being flown out of Sarajevo amid tight security Monday.

The move deepened Serb resentment against the Peace Implementation Force (IFOR), triggering the freezing of high-level military contacts with IFOR and a complete severing of ties with the Croat-Muslim federation government.

In a sign of the heightened tension, an attempt to bring Sarajevo's divided communities closer together with a bus service crossing former battle lines backfired Wednesday when two people on one of the buses were wounded by gunfire in a Serb-held suburb, witnesses said.

In sarajevo, the commander of the NATO-led peace force in Bosnia, Admiral Leighton Smith, said any Serb moves to scupper the U.S.-brokered accords would be a fundamental error.

He was responding to a warning Tuesday by senior Serb leader Nikola Koljevic that "if they (the two officers) are not freed, the whole application of the Dayton accord will be threatened," and the pledge of an "appropriate response."

IFOR spokesman Major Mark Rayner earlier said the peace force had not been in official contact with Serb forces since Thursday, adding that "this unilateral boycott of communications by the VRS (Bosnian Serb army) constitutes a serious violation of the Dayton peace agreement."

Meanwhile in Mostar, Bosnian Croats called for direct talks with rival Muslim leaders on carving up the divided southern city, despite intense international pressure to accept EU plans to reunite the two communities.

Premier apologises for police treatment of deputy

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti Wednesday apologised in Parliament for an incident last July in which Islamist Deputy Bassam Emoush and the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, spokesperson Ibrahim Ghosheh were roughed up by police.

The premier's apology came after Dr. Emoush lashed out at the former Minister of Interior Salameh Hammad for what the deputy described as "martial spirit" treatment he and Mr. Ghosheh were subjected to when police were trying to arrest the latter for questioning.

Recalling the incident, Dr. Emoush said that he was driving behind Mr. Ghosheh's car when they were intercepted by a police car that stopped in the middle of the road (between the Fourth Circle and the Ministry of Interior Circle).

"We are not in Chicago," Dr. Emoush said he told policemen. "You are Mossad, you are Mossad," Mr. Ghosheh said quoted by Dr. Emoush as well as Mr. Hammad.

Both were taken to a police station but were freed shortly afterwards. Dr. Emoush heavily criticised the explanation Mr. Hammad gave to justify the incident in a written reply to the House.

Mr. Hammad accused Dr. Emoush of driving his car "in front of Mr. Ghosheh's car to guard him" against any attacks. Dr. Emoush said that he was driving behind Mr. Ghosheh and he was not acting as an escort or a guard to anyone.

"I have never seen in Amman such a style of dealing with cases except under the rein of the former minister of interior," Dr. Emoush said. "It is true that Mr. Ghosheh said they are from the Mossad since the Israeli embassy was only a few metres away and the protective security men, dressed in civil uniforms, refused to show their IDs."

Dr. Emoush went on to say that Mr. Ghosheh refused to go with them and instead rode in Dr. Emoush's car. One of the policemen, Dr. Emoush continued, drove his car without his permission.

"If the minister was still in office I would have called for investigating his conduct," Dr. Emoush said. "I'm deeply moved by the martial spirit of the former minister... and I cannot hide my admiration of some of the positive aspects of the new government especially the designation of a qualified and respected minister of interior."

The minister of interior, Awad Khleifat, was absent for Wednesday's session.

The premier said: "I can only express my apologies for what happened. It is all over."

Defector denounces U.S. policy on Iraq

AMMAN (AFP) — Iraq's most prominent defector, President Saddam Hussein's son-in-law Hussein Kamel Hassan, on Wednesday denounced U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry for saying his country was involved in efforts to overthrow his country's government.

Gen. Hassan, Iraq's former industry minister who fled to Jordan in August with his wife and other members of the ruling family, condemned Mr. Perry for saying that the U.S. was working with Jordan and other Arab countries to topple the regime of President Saddam.

"No country has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Iraq," he said, adding: "Any interference, whether American or from another Arab country, will have counter effects and will be denounced by the Iraqi people who will fight it."

Gen. Hassan, who has lived in Amman since being given asylum by Jordan in August, welcomed political reforms and improvements in living conditions in his homeland.

He also supported Iraq's talks with the United Nations on selling limited quantities of oil to pay for food under U.N. Resolution 986.

If the talks succeed, it would be the first partial easing of an oil and trade embargo imposed on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The discussions with the U.N. have started to bear fruit. The Iraqi dinar has firmed up considerably against the dollar, which is positive for the Iraqi people," he told AFP.

Gen. Hassan also welcomed the decision of the Iraqi authorities to authorise the creation of political parties and to call legislative elections but said he himself was not intending to set up a political party inside or outside Iraq.

"But I will continue my political activities, whether or not I am in conflict with the Baghdad regime," he said, adding that his return to Iraq would depend on circumstances. "That could be very soon or much later."

Gen. Hassan, the architect of Iraq's advanced weapons programme, also denied a story in Foreign Report, published by the British firm Jane's, which said his father-in-law was suffering from cancer of the lymphatic glands.

"The president is in perfect health and is continuing his activities normally," he said.

No peace without solution to Jerusalem problem — World Council of Churches

CAIRO (AFP) — The World Council of Churches (WCC) said here on Wednesday that peace in the Middle East was impossible without a "just solution" to the problem of Jerusalem.

"Peace has no future without a just and complete solution to the issue of Jerusalem," Tareq Metri, a member of a WCC delegation visiting Egypt, told journalists after meeting with President Hosni Mubarak.

Jerusalem "does not just represent holy places in the eyes of Christians and Muslims, but it is also a matter of a people and of sovereignty," Mr. Metri said.

Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967 and declared the whole city its undivided capital. The Palestinians, backed by Arab states, want the eastern sector as their own capital.

The delegation included WCC Secretary General Father Conrad Reiser.

Besides discussing the Arab-Israeli peace process, the envoys underlined to Mr. Mubarak "the need for dialogue between Christians and Muslims throughout the world and in the Middle East in particular," Mr. Metri said. The Wcc rejects "the inevitability of confrontation between the so-called Christian world and Muslim world and calls for dialogue and struggle against all forms of emnity" between them, he said.

Court grants Shbeilat right not to name witness

AMMAN (AP) — A military court trying the leader of the Engineers Association, Leith Shbeilat accused of slandering His Majesty the King, Wednesday retracted a request for the names of defence witnesses who will appear in the trial.

The decision of the State Security Court was made after lawyers defending Mr. Shbeilat refused to identify their witnesses before they are called to testify.

Jawad Yunis, head of a 31-member defence team, told the tribunal Wednesday that he was concerned that "the witnesses could be subjected to coercion by security authorities if their names were revealed now.

"We insist on our position not to reveal the names of our witnesses and this right..." is protected under Jordanian law," Mr. Yunis said.

He said he plans to call in 50 witnesses, including prominent Egyptian writer Mohammad Hasanein Heikal.

The hearing was adjourned until Sunday, one day after Mr. Shbeilat's syndicate elects a new president for a two-year term.

Mr. Shbeilat, a former member of parliament, is a fierce critic of Jordan's October 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

He was arrested Dec. 7 on charges of slandering the King and the Royal family in lectures he has delivered over the last few months. He has pleaded innocent.

In November 1993, Mr. Shbeilat, then a member of parliament was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for affiliation with an Iranian-backed militant group that sought to topple the regime. He was released the same month with a Royal pardon.

COLUMN 10

U.S. woman gives husband Valentine's gift of life

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — A California woman planned to give her husband the gift of life this Valentine's Day by donating one of her kidneys to replace his own failing organs, a hospital spokeswoman said Tuesday. Surgeons at Stanford University Medical Centre, 50 kilometres south of San Francisco, were due to transplant one of Noreen McGuire's kidneys into her husband Michael Wednesday, a medical centre spokewoman said. Michael McGuire, 48, has been suffering from kidney failure due to diabetes. "My wife said 'if I could give you one, I would.' She said that from the beginning," Michael McGuire told reporters. But it was only later that doctors told the couple, married for 16 years, that they had the same blood type and were a good match for a transplant. "It was pure, dumb luck," Mr. McGuire said. "They said we're as close a match as you can get without being related." It was by chance that the operation, expected to take three to four hours, was set for Valentine's Day. The couple, who live in nearby Santa Clara, California, wanted to have the operation in mid-February and Stanford Medical Centre routinely performs transplants Wednesdays. Explaining why she wanted to go through with the transplant, Mrs. McGuire, 45, said: "I want to keep him around longer." "I appreciated her before, but this is a whole different level," her husband said.

Firemen rescue red-faced Valentine's couple

TAUPO, New Zealand (R) — Valentine's Day got off to an unromantic start for a New Zealand couple who had to be rescued by firefighters after a moonlit rendezvous took a painful turn. The New Zealand Press Association reported the pair were enjoying a glass of wine by moonlight just after midnight beside Lake Taupo, in the central North Island, when they fell over a 2.5 metre bank. The woman fell over first, injuring a finger. Her partner tried to pull her up, but fell himself into a thicket of blackberries. He suffered minor cuts in the fall and was unable to find his way out in the darkness. Firefighters from the nearby fire station were eventually called to the rescue. The names of the couple were not available.

Thai couples rush to tie knot at 'Village of Love'

BANGKOK (R) — Hundreds of Thai couples converged on Bangkok's "Village of Love" Wednesday to ensure their marriage certificates bear a Valentine's Day stamp. Couples began queueing up at central Bangkok's Bang Rak district office before dawn to fill out their forms and get their certificates. "We're registering here because it's a good name and it's Feb. 14th," bride-to-be Namthip Phathiya-nond, 27, told reporters. Bang Rak means "Village of Love" in Thai and the government office in the district has in recent years become the favourite place for couples to register marriages, with 282 certificates issued there last year. District officials got in on the occasion this year and organised a raffle for the queueing couples with the first prize a free honeymoon night at one of Bangkok's top hotels.